



# SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

MODERN LIFE MEETS ANCIENT WISDOM

Vol 732







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# SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

It was the end of a warm summer's day, in 1916. The large rambling family house cooled down as the pleasant breeze wafted in through the wide verandahs of sun-dried mudbricks in Ernakulam, Kerala.



To the soft murmur of swaying palms and whispering waves was added a new sound — the hearty cry of a new-born baby.

The birth of the first-born was an occasion for much joy and celebration for Kuttan Menon and Manku.

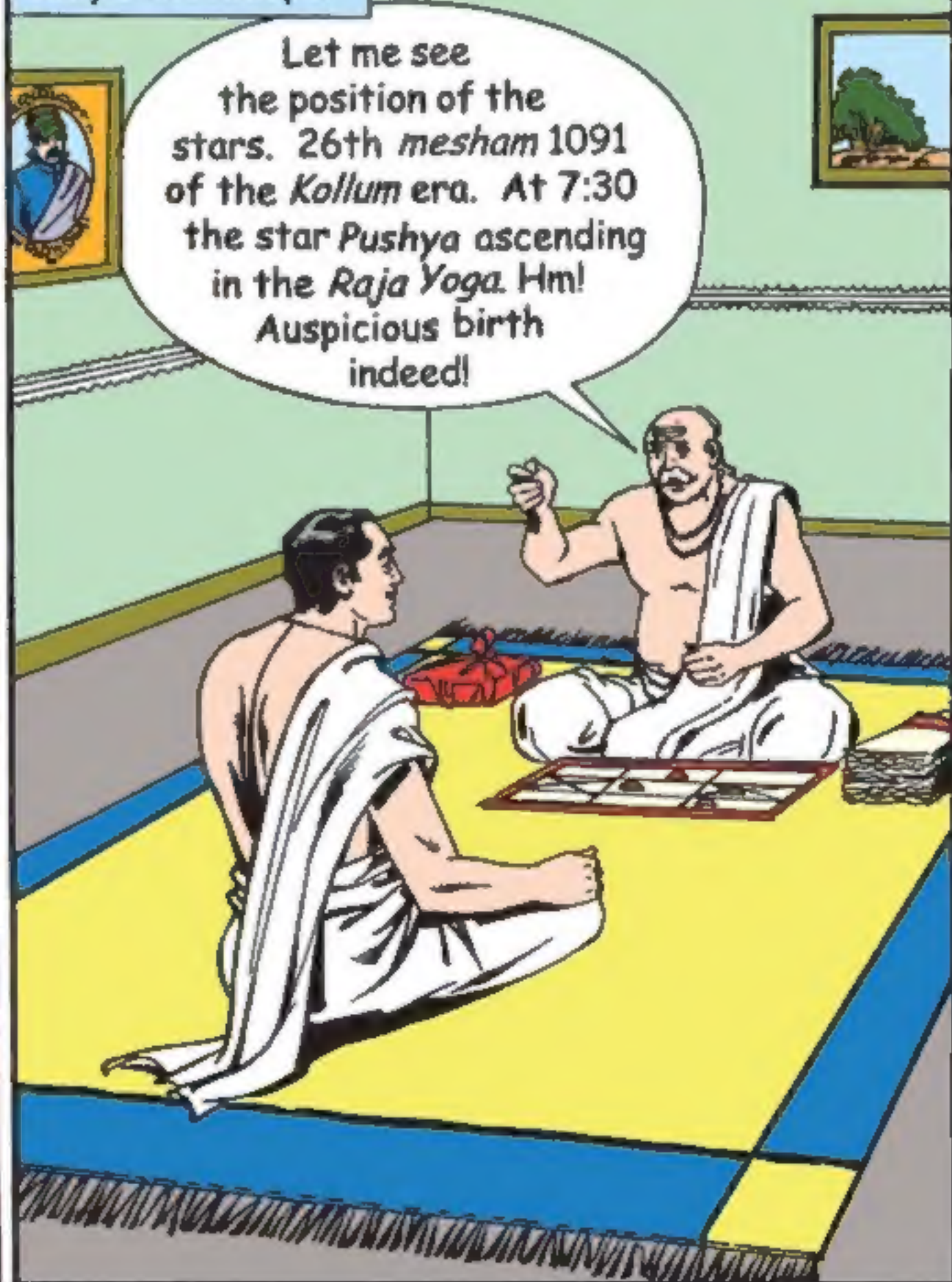
Kuttan! It's a boy!  
As predicted!

But of course!  
Just as our family  
priest foretold.



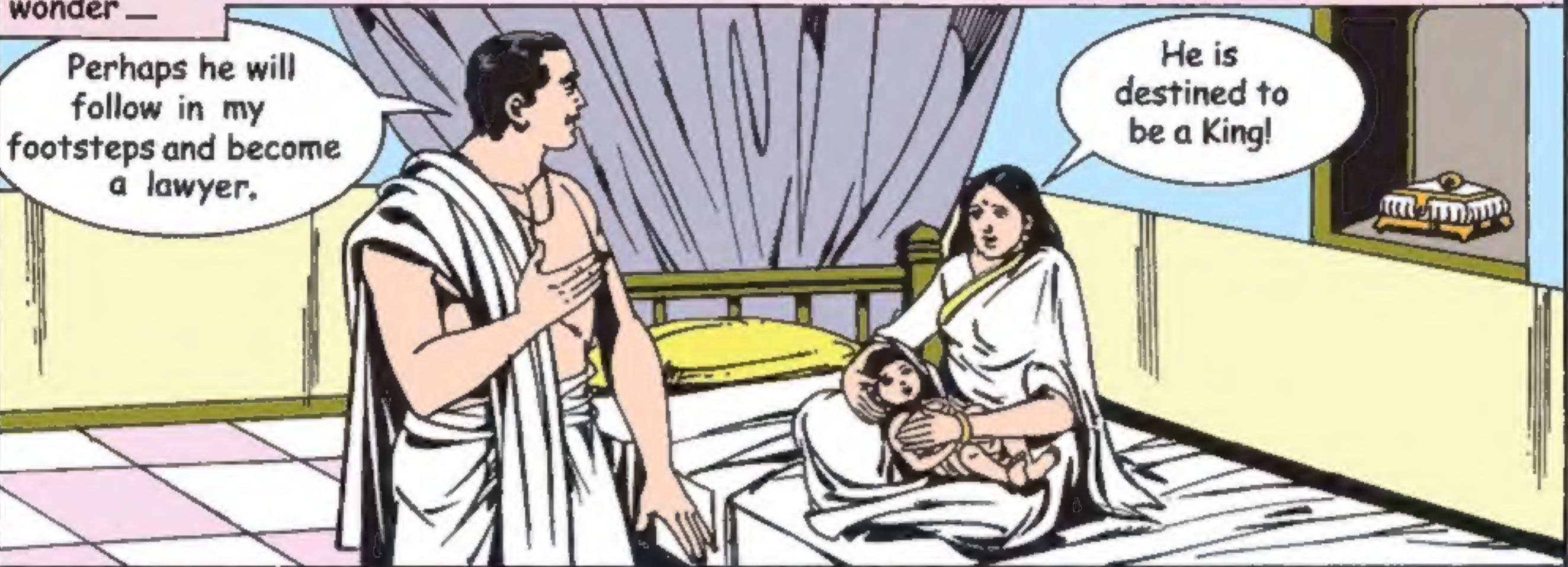
At once, an astrologer was sent for to cast the baby's horoscope.

Let me see  
the position of the  
stars. 26th *mesham* 1091  
of the *Kollum* era. At 7:30  
the star *Pushya* ascending  
in the *Raja Yoga*. Hm!  
Auspicious birth  
indeed!

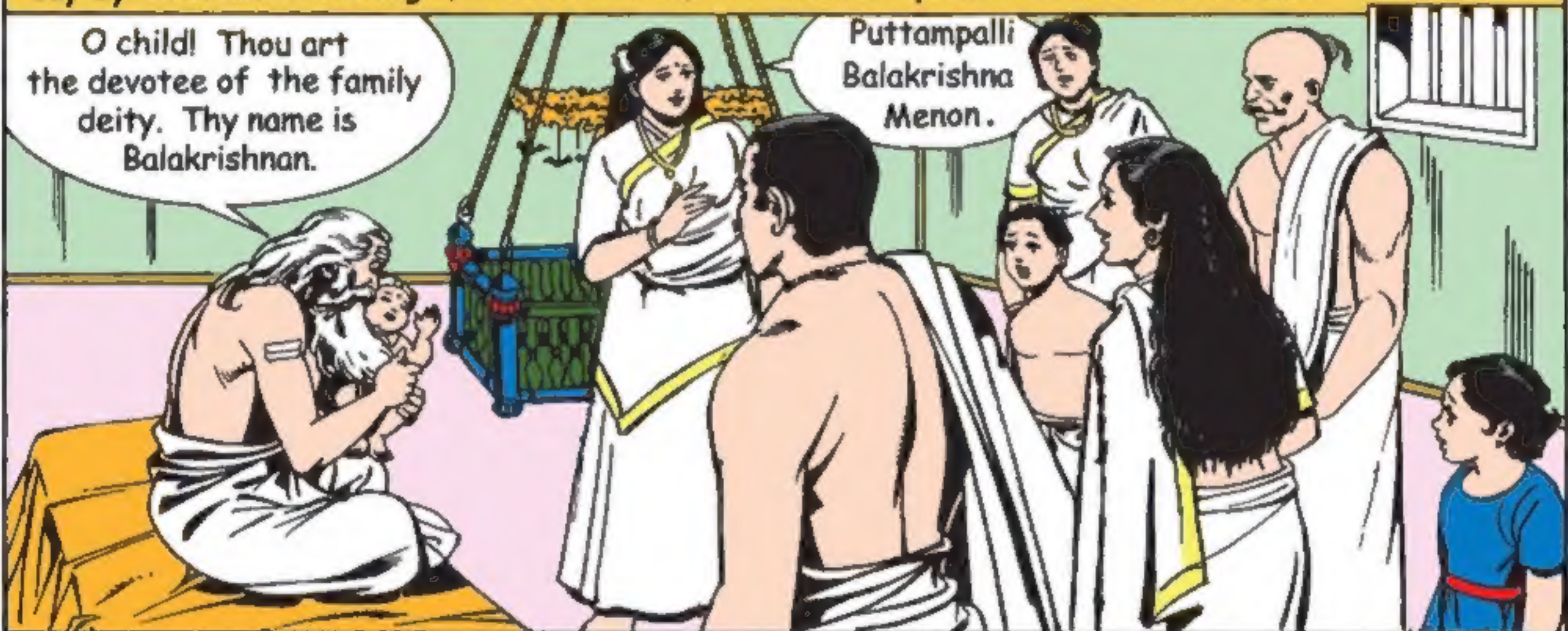




The new father's chest swelled with pride. Vadakke Kurupath Kuttan Menon was a judge at the local court in Ernakulam. While Manku, or Parukutti Amma, gazed at her newborn with affection and wonder —



The family lived at Poothampalli House belonging to Manku's father, Choppully Kunikuttan Menon, a devout, generous man. The *namakarana samskara*, or naming ceremony, was performed on the fourth day by Chattambi Swamigal, a learned saint, who was a frequent visitor to the house.



The baby's first day out was a landmark.



His head was shaved and his ears were pierced and adorned with gold earrings. Even the first morsel of solid food was a celebration.

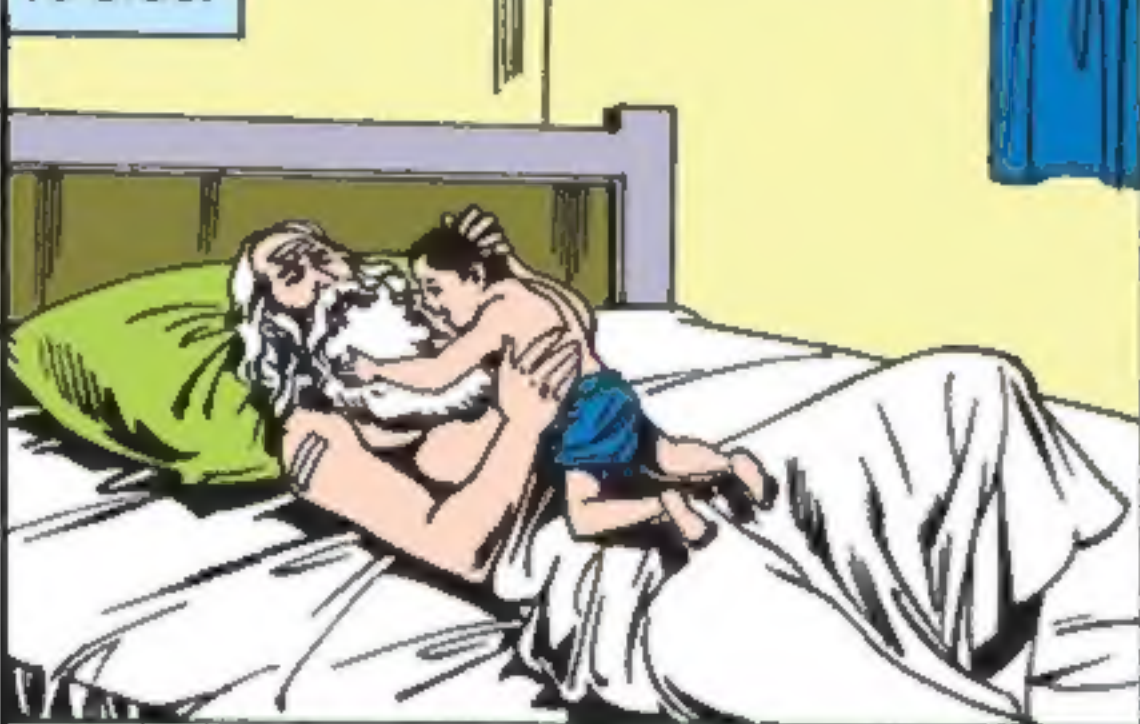


Balakrishnan, Balan for short, received all the rituals prescribed by the scriptures.

\* The day on which cobbed rice is first served



Whenever Chattambi Swamikal visited the house, his favourite child was Balan. He would place Balan on his chest and rock him gently while rolling his head from side to side.

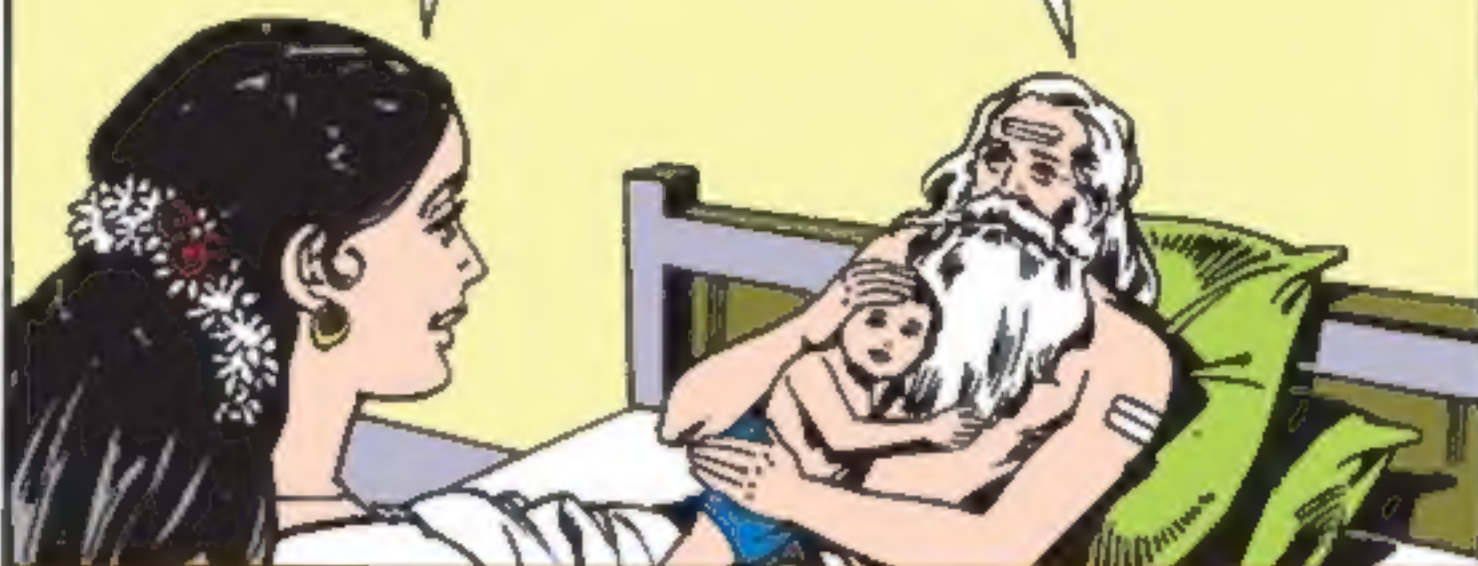


Both of them prattled on endlessly.

Balan's mother was mystified by these strange conversations.

What on earth do you say to him?

It's between him and me. I've taught him everything!



The memory of this bond of love and peace remained in the boy's mind all his life.

Little Balan was initiated to the world of letters. Into a tray of unhusked rice, his stubby little finger was guided to trace the first letter.

Balan, this is Om!  
Say Om thrice.

Om!Om!Om!



The ritual initiation was to reap rich rewards of exceptional oratory and a unique way with words.

Swamikal always repeated the same phrase after each visit.

Take care of the child!

Yes. We remember your prediction that he will become great.

But initially he will have to suffer much.



To the group of six cousins who loved to play with Balan were added two sisters of his own, Padmini and Kanakam.

A healthy baby girl!  
Both mother and daughter are fine.

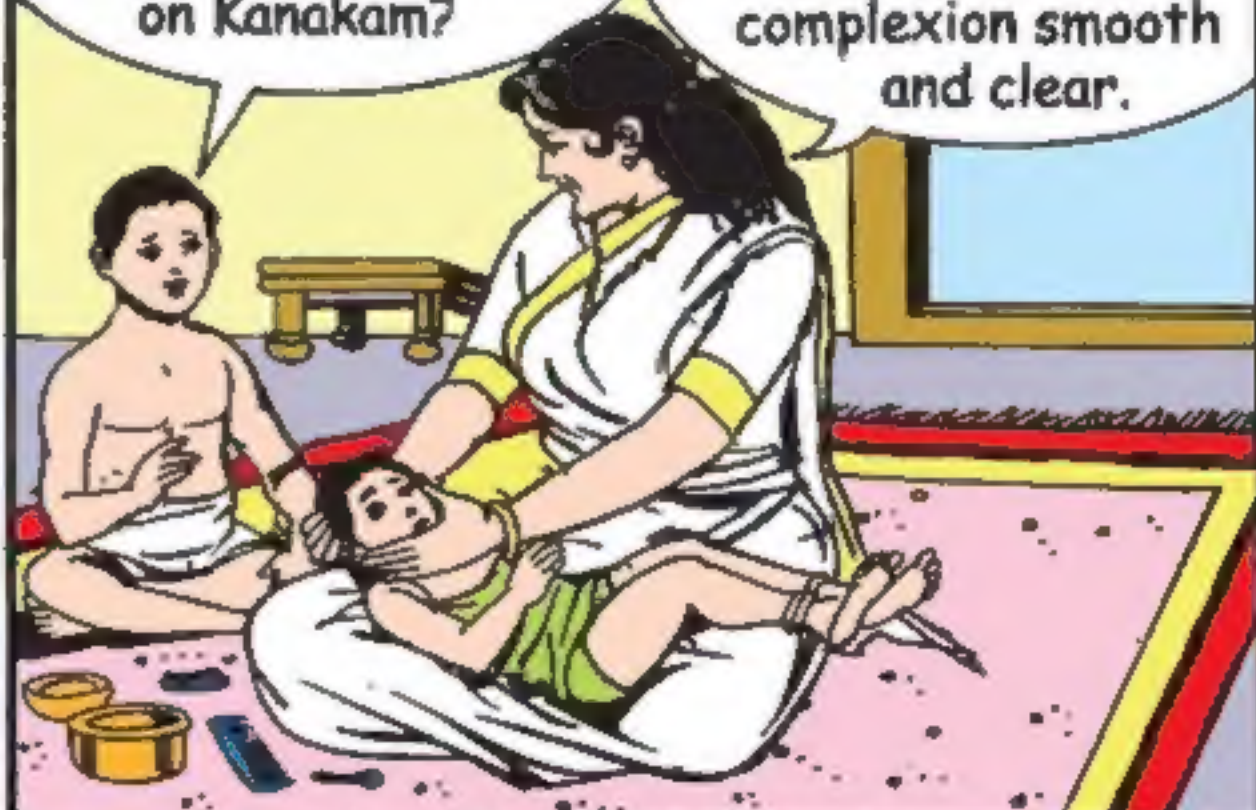


However, just after the birth, Balan's mother died.

No one could replace his own mother. But at Poothampalli house, he and his sisters received abundant love and affection from their aunt.

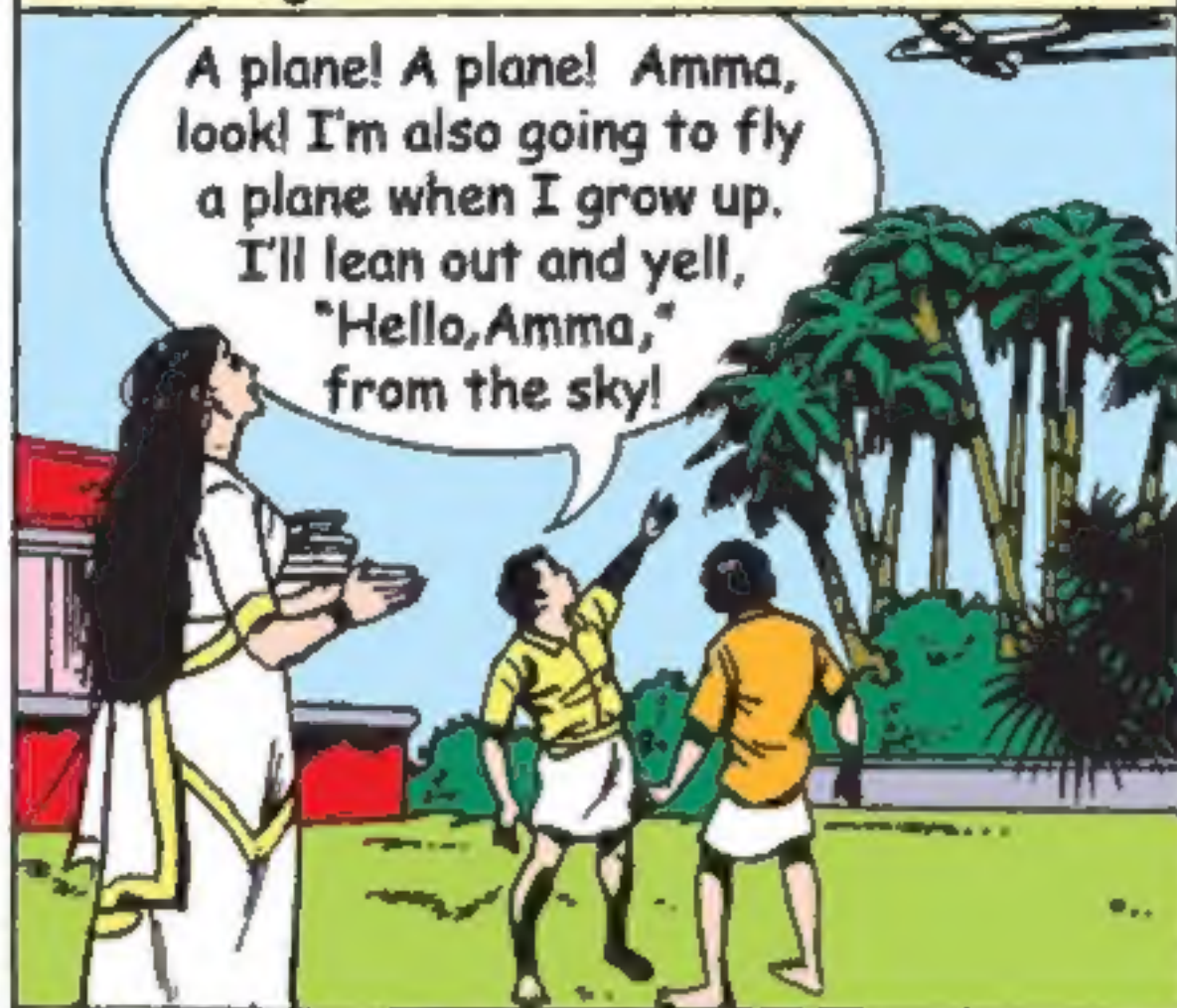
Kochu Amma! Why are you putting that paste on Kanakam?

This Vayambu paste will make her complexion smooth and clear.



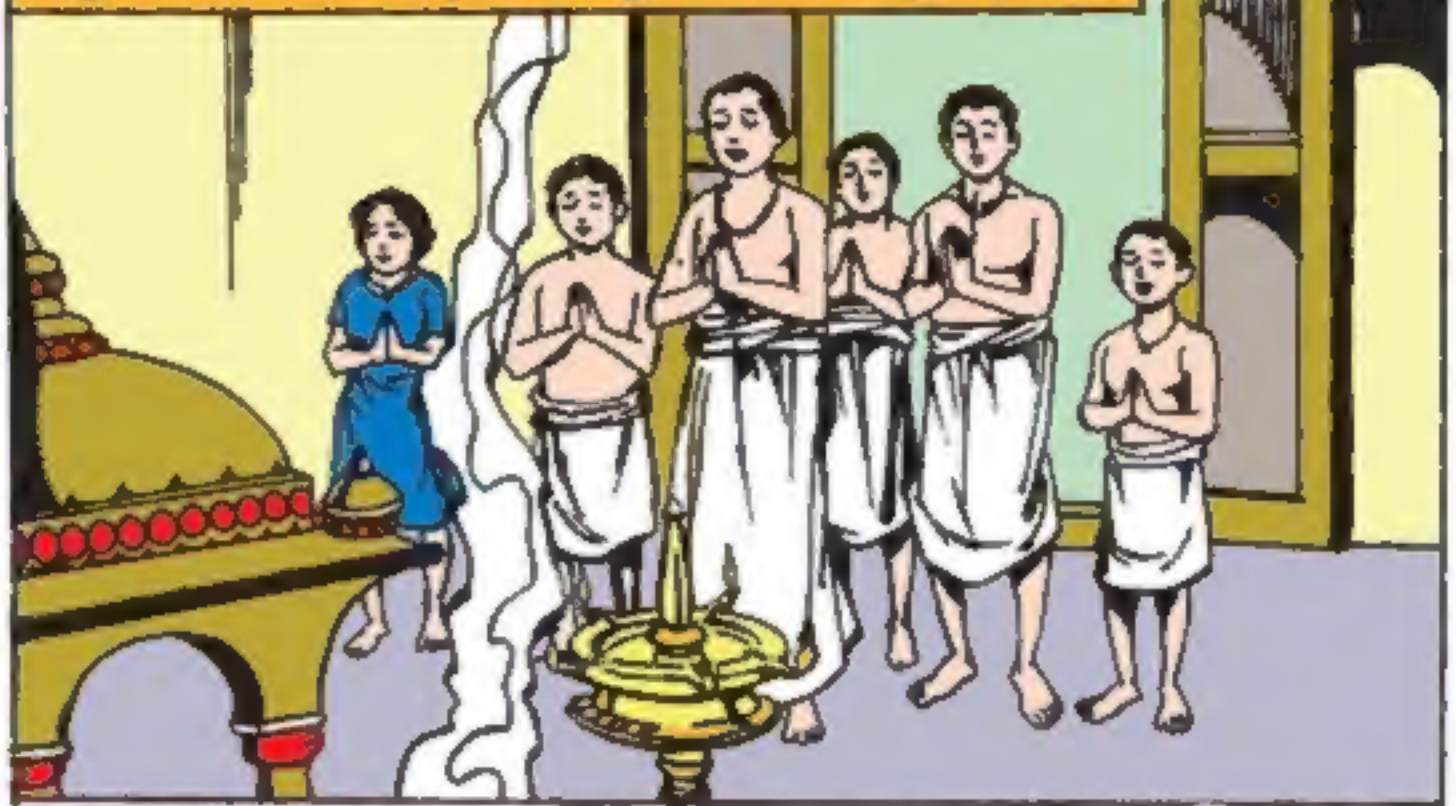


Kochu Amma, his aunt, took over the entire mothering.



A plane! A plane! Amma, look! I'm also going to fly a plane when I grow up. I'll lean out and yell, "Hello, Amma," from the sky!

As the sun shed its orange rays across the lagoons and rice fields, it was time to light the oil lamps and gather for prayers.



Freshly bathed, Balan lined up in the family prayer room, along with the other children.

It was not out of choice but compulsion. No prayer, no dinner. It started with a simple prayer song, or bhajan.



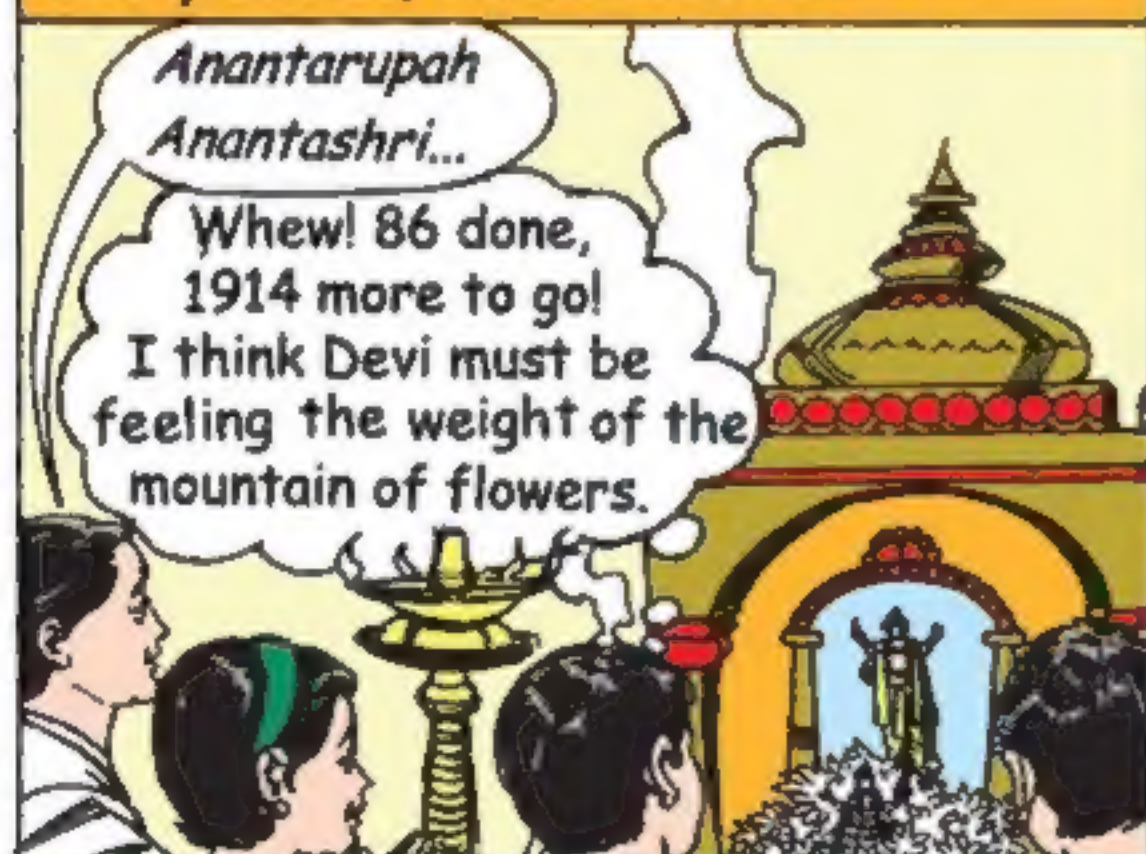
Anjana Shridhara Charu  
Moorte Krishna

For fifteen minutes the kids sang with gusto, each trying to sing the loudest.



It was time for the main service.

The women of the household chanted the one thousand names each of the two family deities, Vishnu and Devi.



Anantarupah  
Anantashri...

Whew! 86 done,  
1914 more to go!  
I think Devi must be  
feeling the weight of the  
mountain of flowers.

To keep himself alert, Balan began to day-dream and invent private games about the gods lined up on the wall.



Lord Shiva is my favourite.  
Let me see how long I can  
concentrate on Him.

With each name, a flower petal was offered to the deity. It was tough for a ten-year-old child to sit through two hours of prayers.



The picture before him was of Lord Shiva with the water of the holy Ganga springing from His matted hair, a crescent moon on His forehead, a serpent around His blue neck and a tender smile on his face.



Now when I close my eyes tight, I'll try to remember it in complete detail.



How thrilled he was to recall the splendid image in his mind whenever he wished! Accidentally, Balan had discovered a technique of meditation—

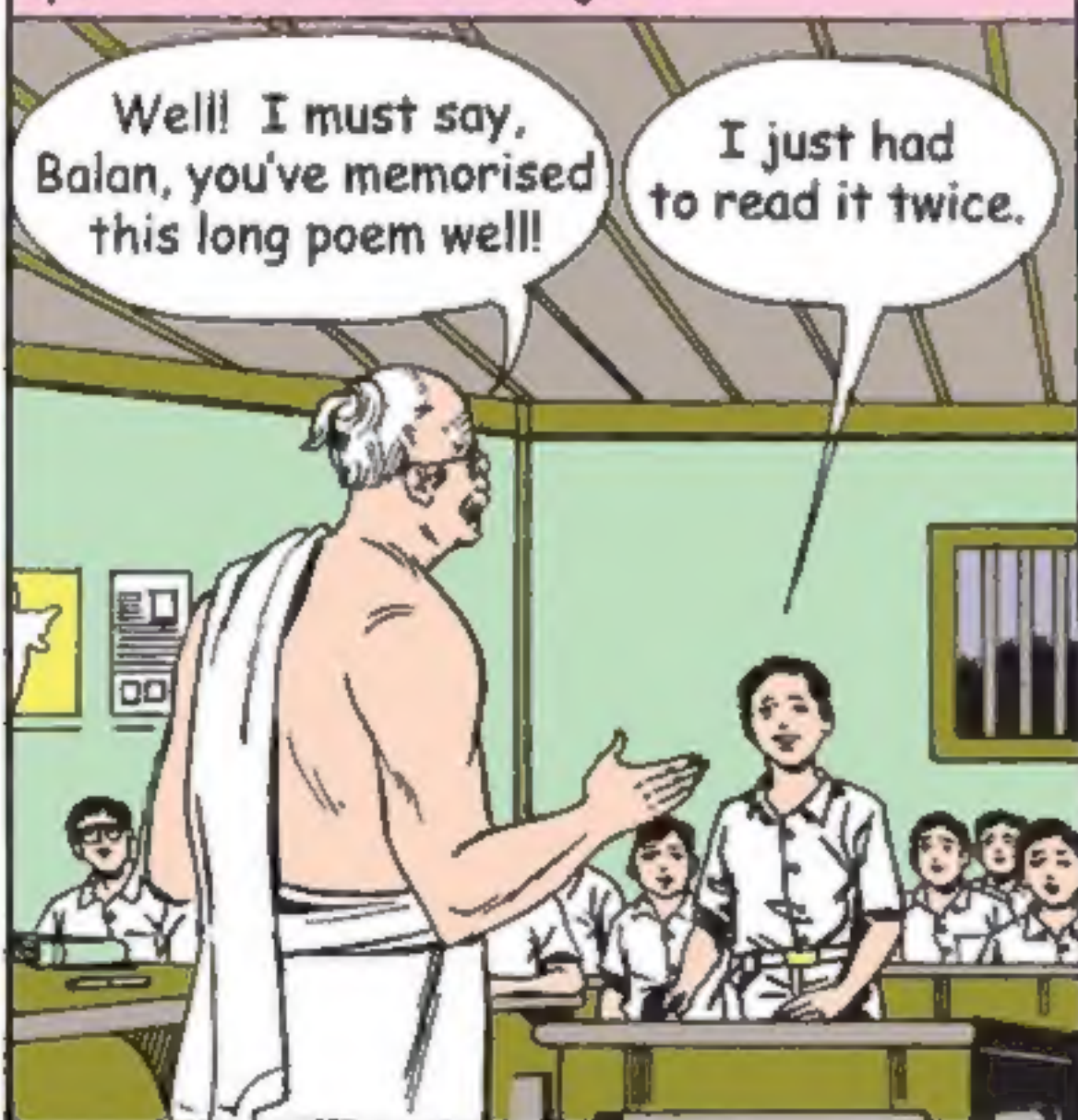


The game he had devised to pass time was a powerful tool for spiritual upliftment.

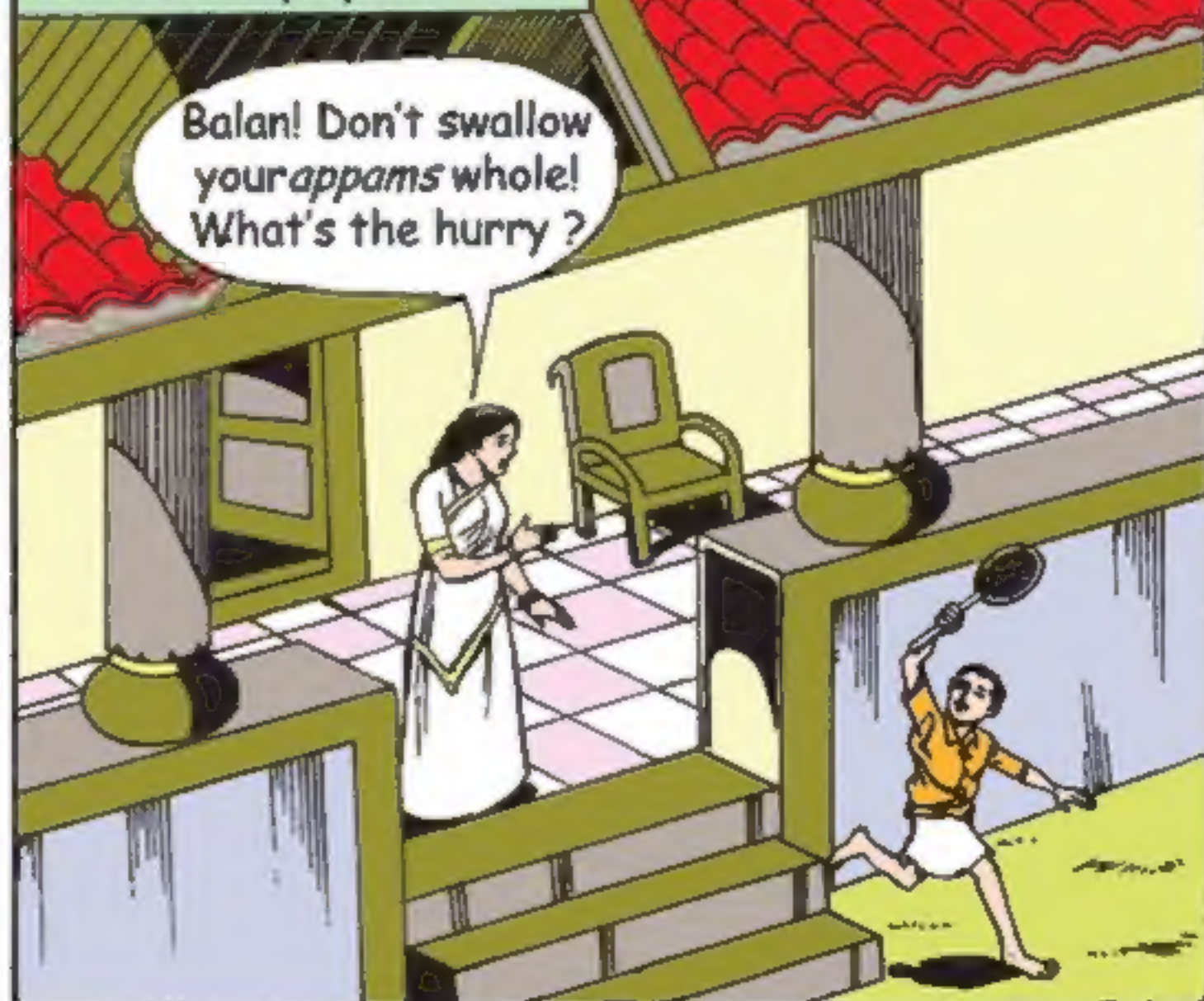
At the age of five, he began school. Every morning after a meal of *sambar* and rice, Balan and the other boys would go to Sri Rama Varma Boys' School.



Schoolwork was easy for Balan and he did quite well in all the subjects.



After school, they raced home and were quick to run out and play.





His school reports always did him proud.

Well, well! Balan has once again topped the score in Malayalam and English.

When on earth does he study? I always find him playing.



He also managed to find time to help his kid sisters with their homework.

Baletta\*, just look at this awful maths exercise. I just can't get it right.

Up to your tricks again, Padmini?



There! As usual, you've tricked me into doing a bit of your homework! But you'd better do the rest on your own.

If I do it right, will you tell us another ghost story?



No! No! I'll get nightmares!

Little Kanakam was petrified of ghosts and all creatures of the dark, real or imaginary. Her brother fetched her a bit of red string and —

This is a special amulet blessed by Lord Shiva. No evil will come near you as long as it is on your wrist.

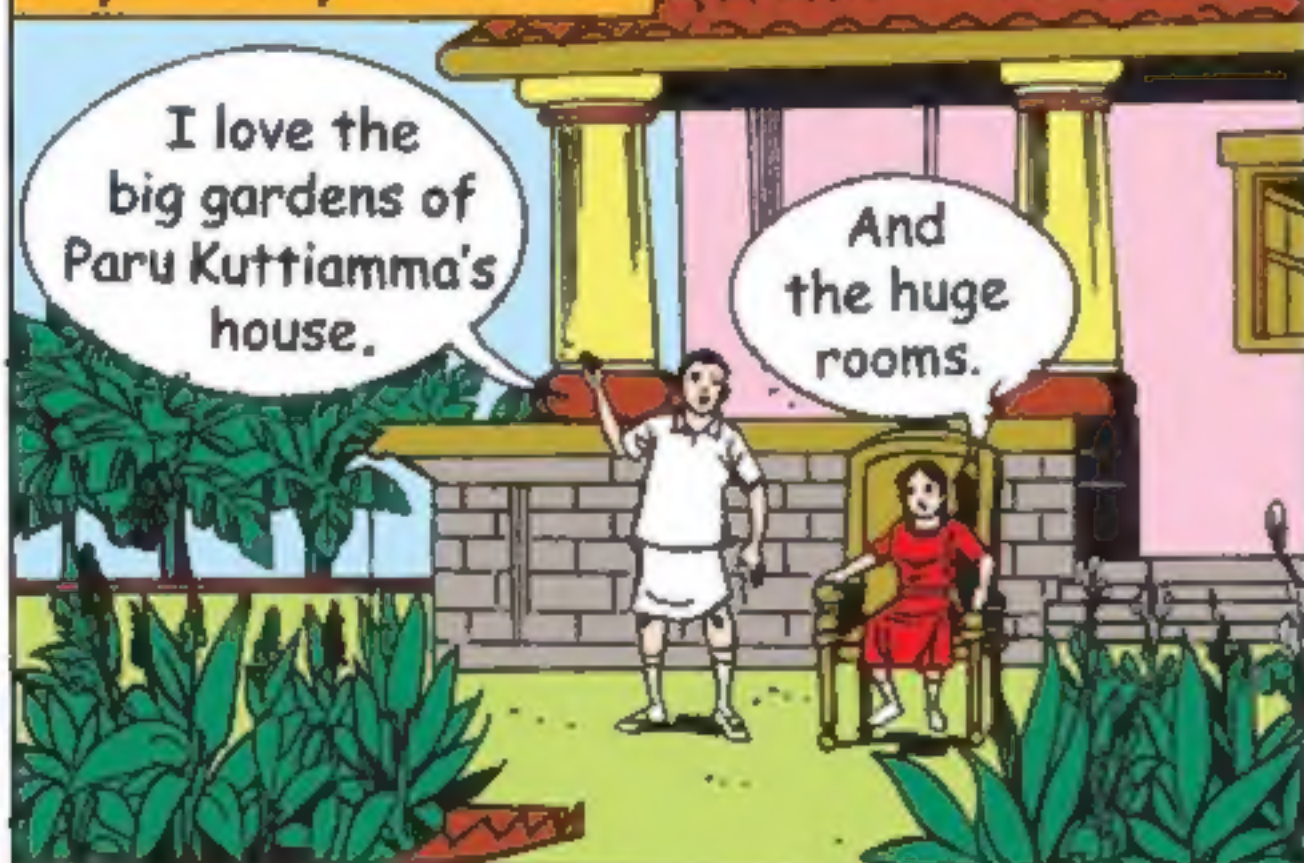


He had learnt that faith could dispel fear.

Their favourite holiday spot was the palatial home of their aunt who was married into the royal family of Cochin.

I love the big gardens of Paru Kuttiamma's house.

And the huge rooms.



Balan and his cousins managed to create as much noise as would an entire royal army.

Wherever Balan went, there was noise and laughter. During the ceremonial celebration of the 60th birthday of an uncle, the children had a lot of fun.

Oh! You've eaten up all the plantains meant for the feast! Where will we get some more?

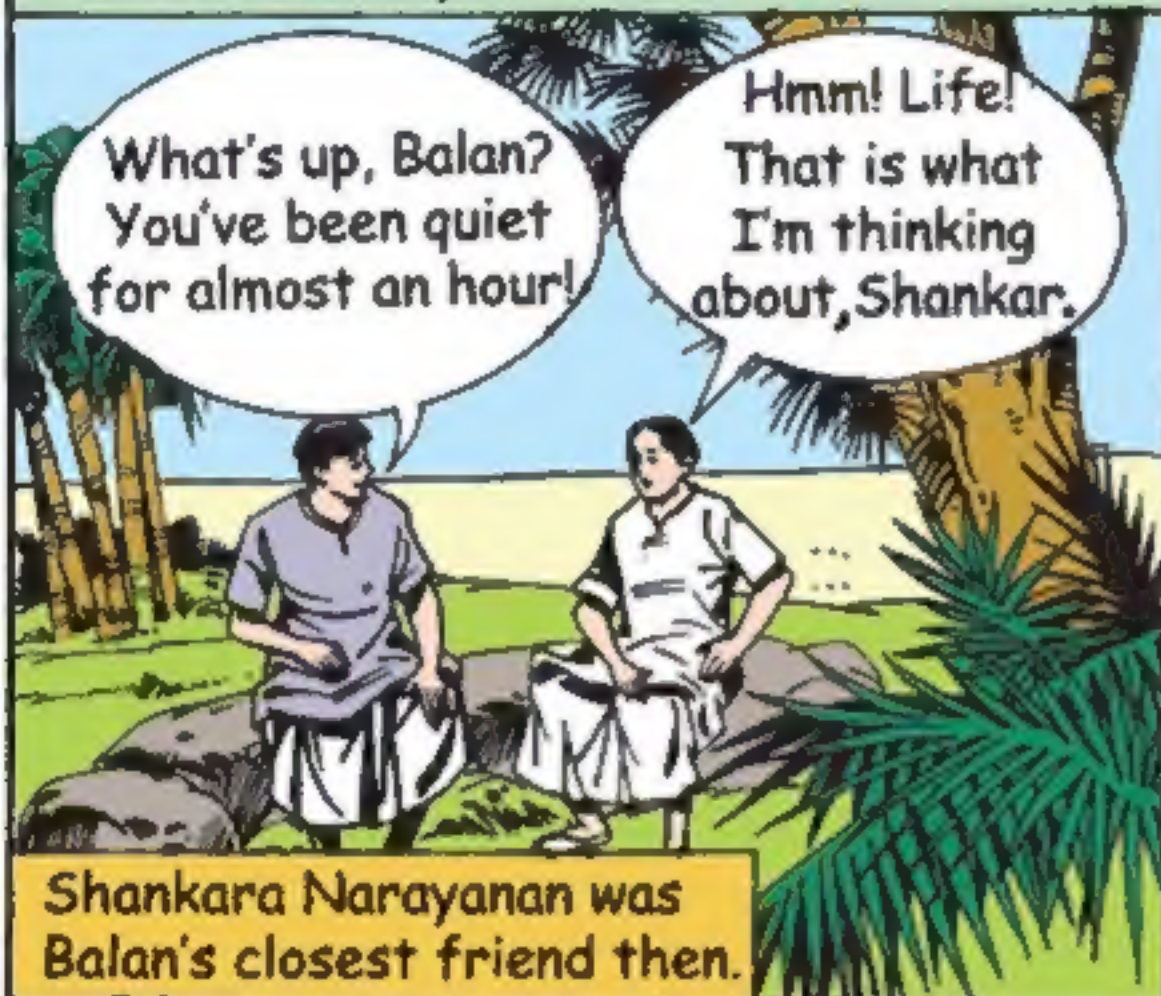
From the plants.



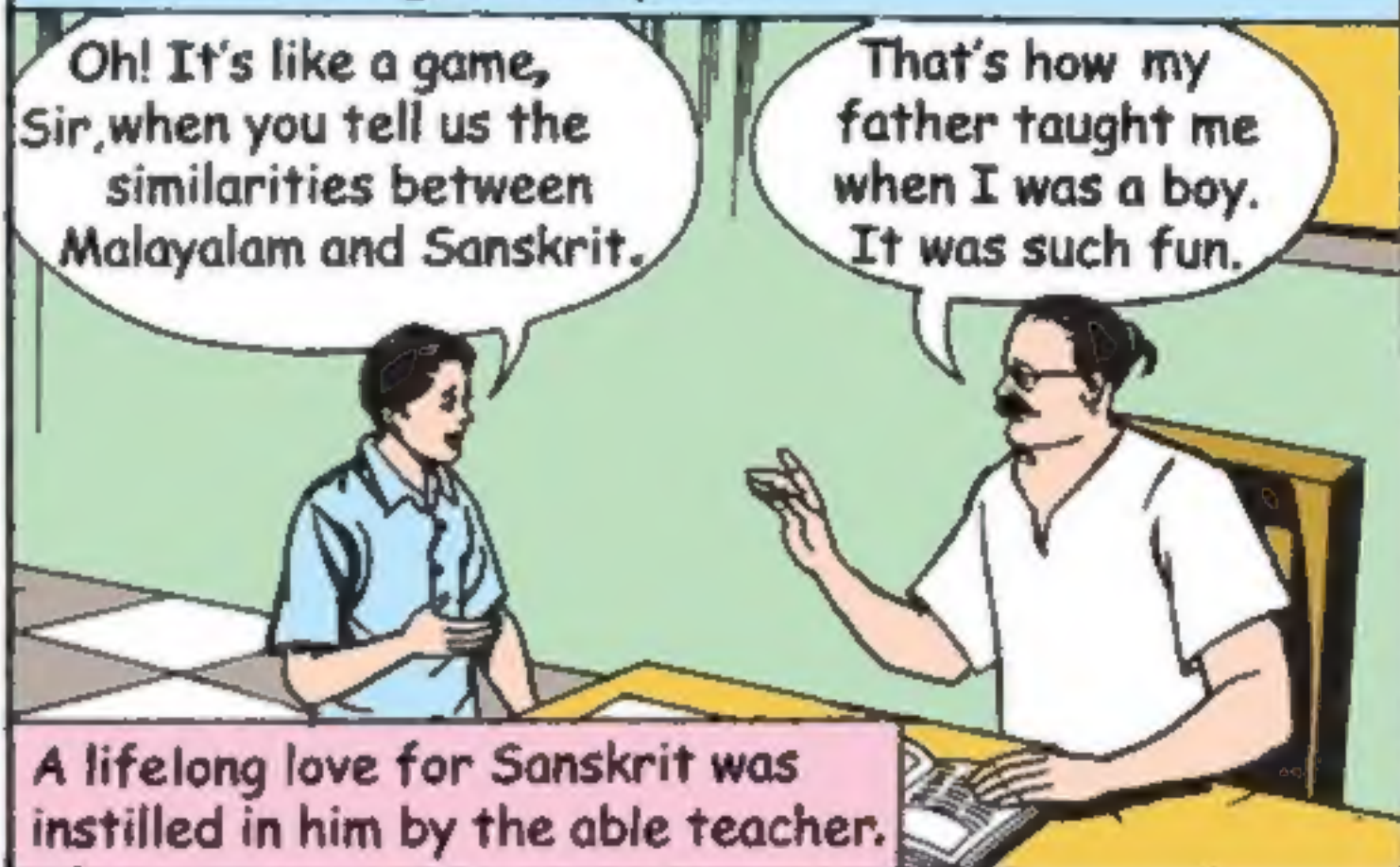
\* Etta means elder brother



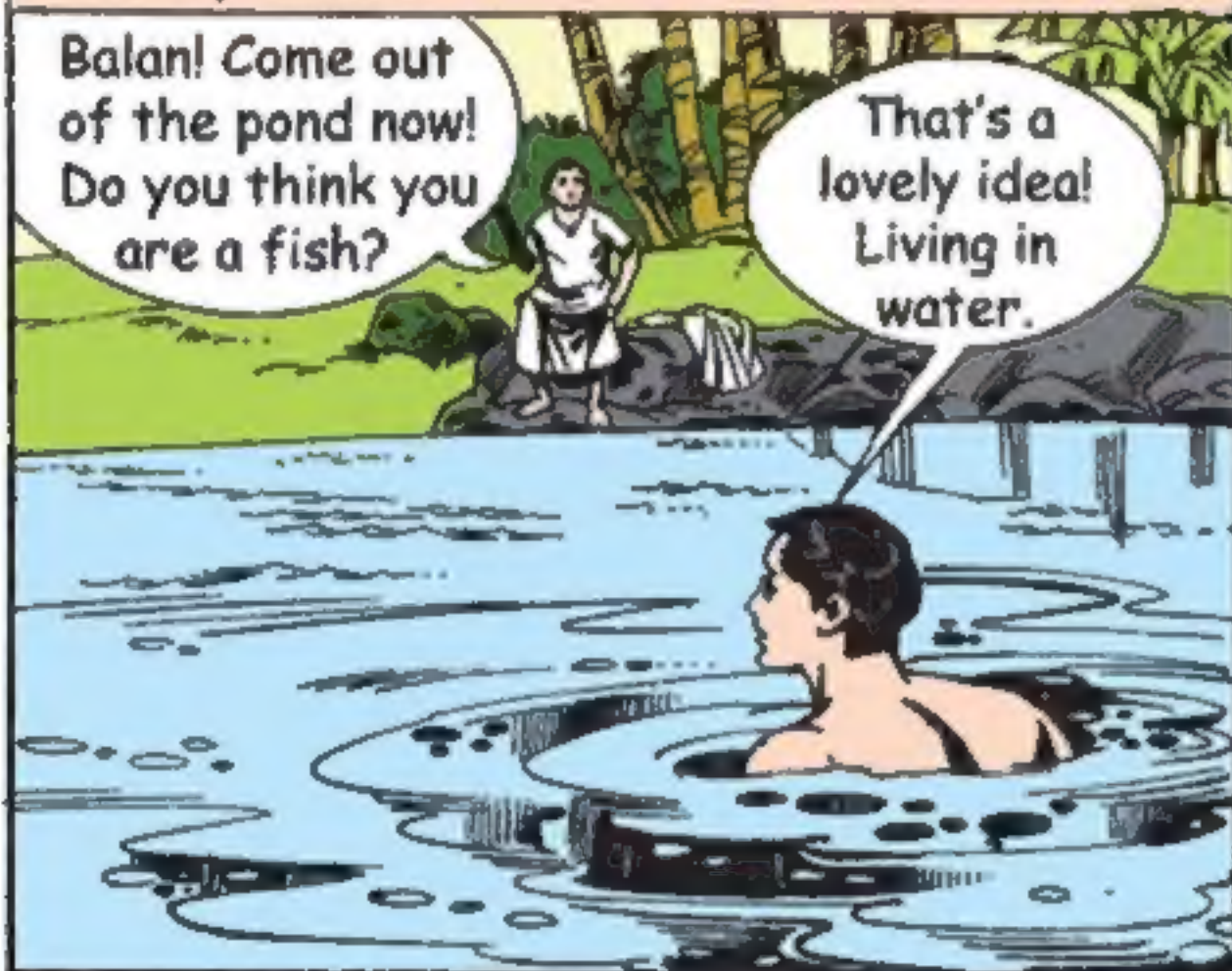
But there was also a serious side to this mischievous boy.



Balan's favourite subject was Sanskrit. His teacher made the difficult subject easy by comparing it with his mother tongue, Malayalam.



When Balan was twelve, he spent the summer with his cousin Kuttappan in a large rambling country estate.



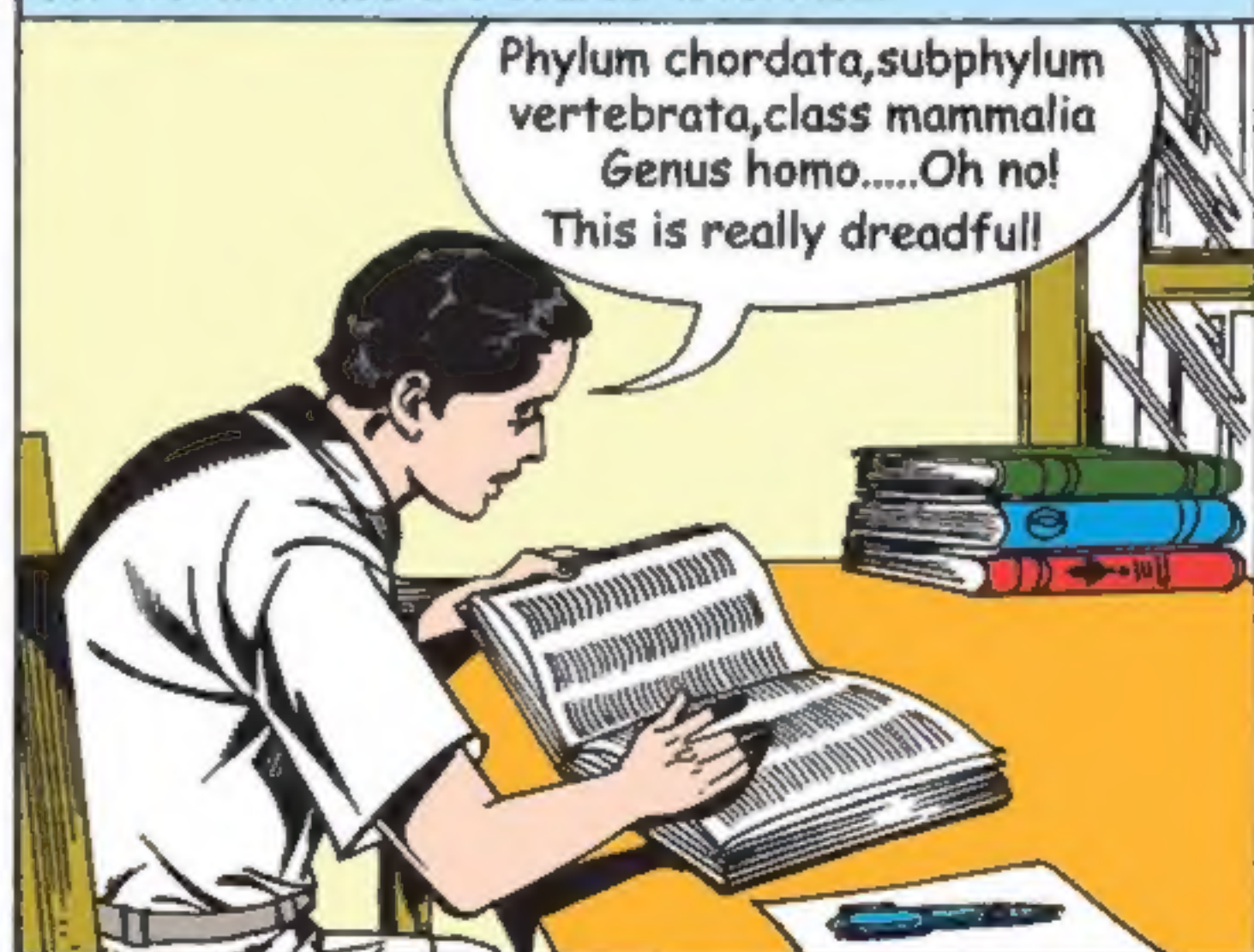
Throughout his childhood, he had a mind of his own.



Yet, without fail, every night before going to sleep he chanted Lord Shiva's name.



Balan began classes at Maharaja College, Ernakulam, for his intermediate course in science.





The result was not unexpected.

Balan! You obviously cannot manage Science! You've barely passed!

I have!

His father moved to Thrissur and Balan enrolled in St. Thomas College to study Liberal Arts.

Thank goodness! No more dissections! No more Science.

His father was promoted to a higher position in the Thrissur court. He then married Devaki Menon.

In due course, she bore him three daughters and a son.

As a teenager, Balan considered himself quite an intellectual.

Balan, we are going to the tank for the evening bath.

Not me! Just wet my towel in the water.

The evening bath before prayer was a daily ritual in the household.

His stepmother was busy.

Balan, I see you've had your bath. Get me some fresh banana leaves for the puja.

Oh dear! I'd better have a quick dip.

Outwardly agnostic, Balan imbibed the spiritual ambience of the tradition-bound family. He also continued his evening *japa*.

College life in Thrissur made Balan a flamboyant young man.

It's so hot! How can you bear to wear that silk shirt?

Ah! But silk suits a handsome young man like me.

It was fashionable in those days to have plastered hair.

So much oil! It's almost dripping from your head. So much hair dressing will make you bald some day.

Then I shan't need any oil.

What will become of him! He's so intelligent, charming and witty but he's not the least bit interested in studies.

Check and mate!!



Balan was fascinated by his grandmother, who sat peacefully all day on the upstairs balcony.

Don't you get bored sitting here all day? Come out, it's Pooram.

No! I have Lord Krishna's name on my lips and his image in my heart.

Pooram, at Thrissur, is a special festival. There are games, an orchestra, fireworks and an elephant parade.

Balan! Come. We are going to see the elephant parade.

Aha! Girls watch the elephants. Boys watch the girls!

His uncle Neelakanta Menon was the police Commissioner of Cochin and later the Chief Justice one of the few who owned a car.

Balan! Did you trace that funny sound?

Yes! It was a little nut!

Balan was good at tinkering with the car and as a reward, got to drive it.

His uncle was a graduate from Oxford Law School and hoped his nephew would follow in his footsteps.

Balan, you like the good things in life but for that you need a career — hard work.

There's a lot of time to think about a career.

His childhood habit of questioning everything grew with age.

Why should there be a God?

God is the sum of all knowledge and goodness. We are each of us a ray of that sun.

The arrogance of adolescence warped all such ideas.

If I am a ray of God, it is my presence that makes the existence of God visible. So Balan is the source of God, not God the source of Balan.

Balan, why have you decided to do postgraduation in literature and law from Lucknow? Why leave home?

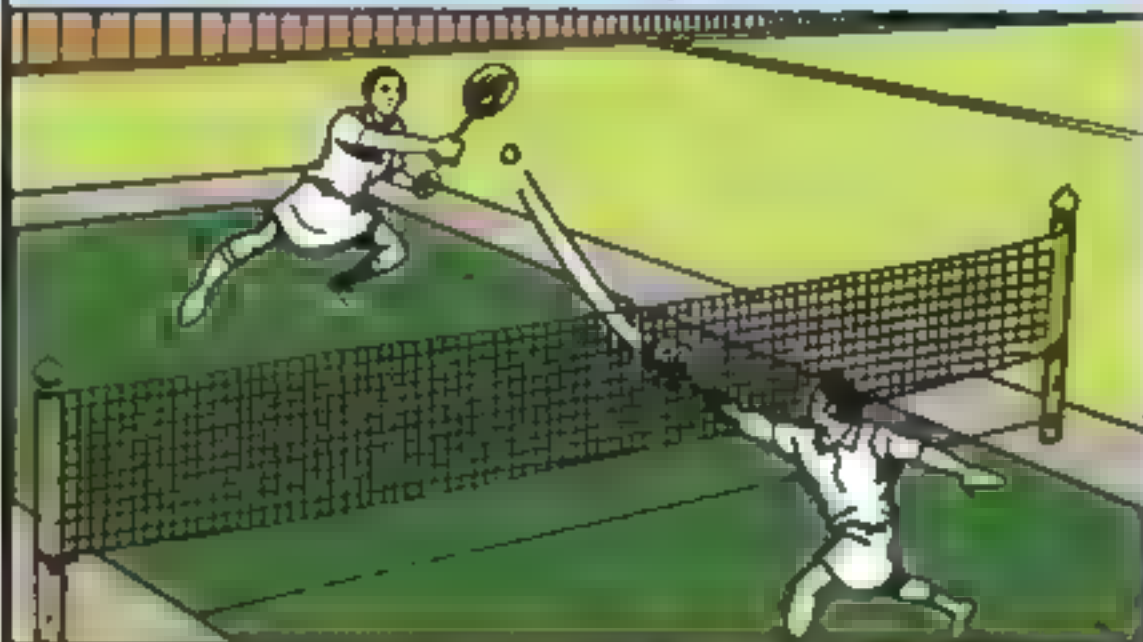
Simple! I didn't qualify for admission here.

Balan excelled in his literature courses. His personal favourites were Shelley and George Bernard Shaw.

Men are wise in proportion not to their experience, but to their capacity for experience. If we could learn from mere experience, the stones of London would be wiser than the wisest man.



But he managed a lot of time for tennis and was on the University team.



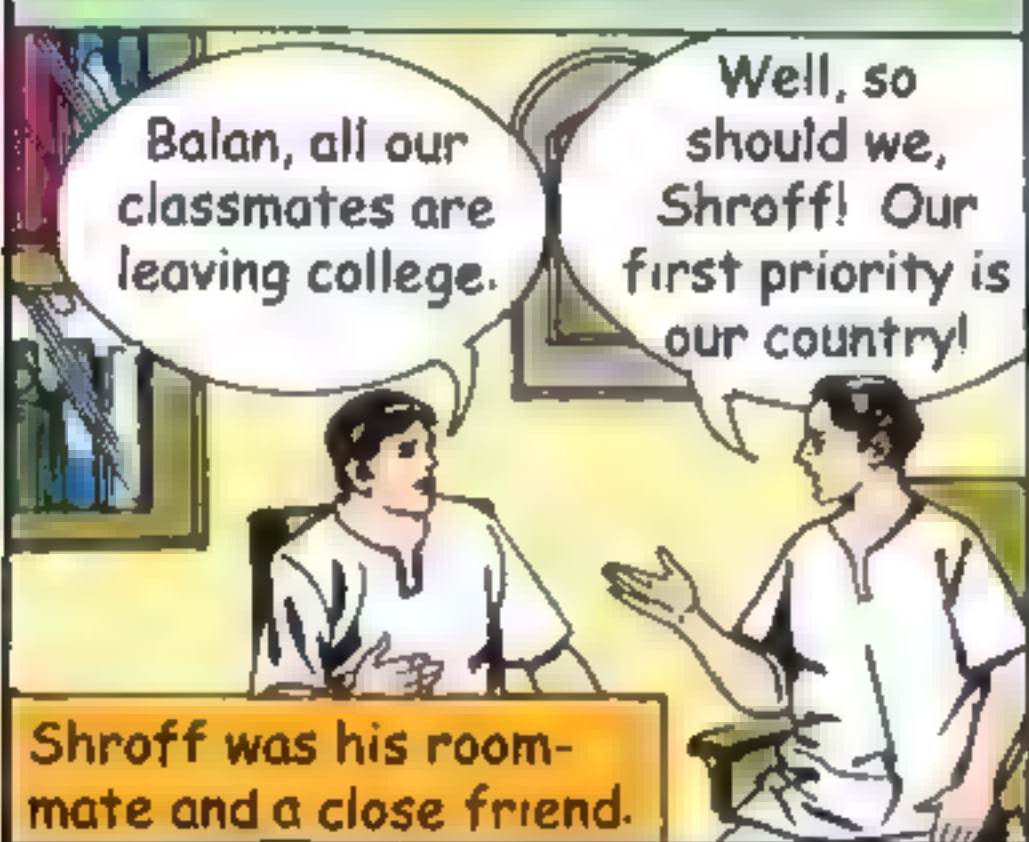
He represented Lucknow University in singles matches against Ghaus Mohmed, who represented India at Wimbledon.

Problems were looming large on the national scene. Mahatma Gandhi had launched the Quit India Movement in 1942.



There were mass strikes, protest marches, and demonstrations. Students left schools and colleges to join the movement.

Among them was Balakrishna Menon.



Balan, all our classmates are leaving college.

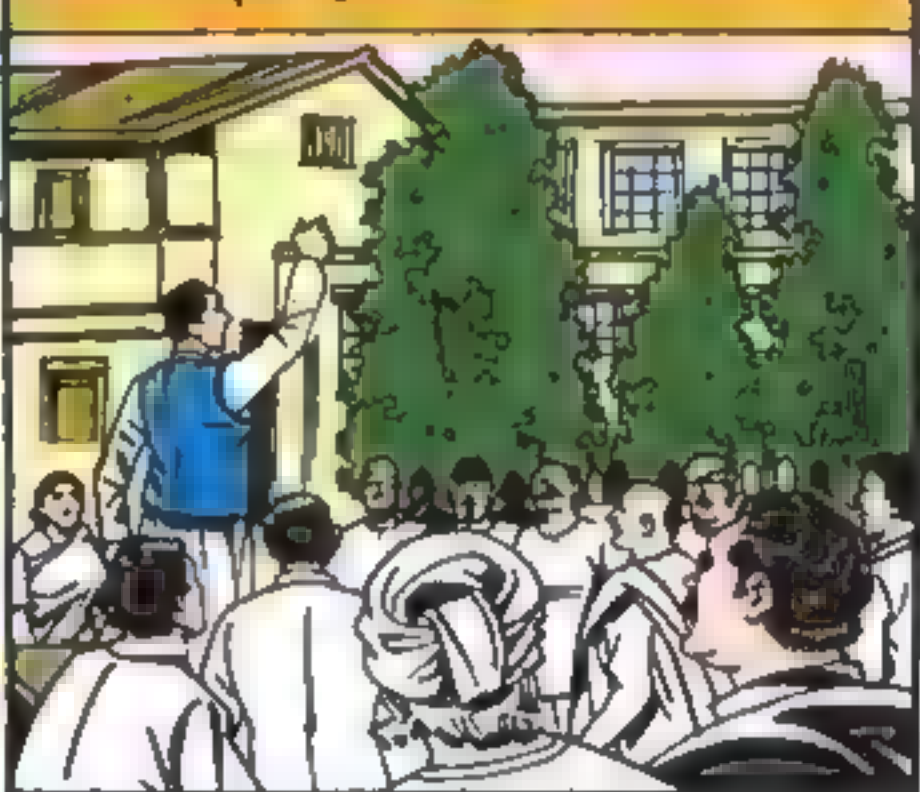
Well, so should we, Shroff! Our first priority is our country!

Shroff was his roommate and a close friend.

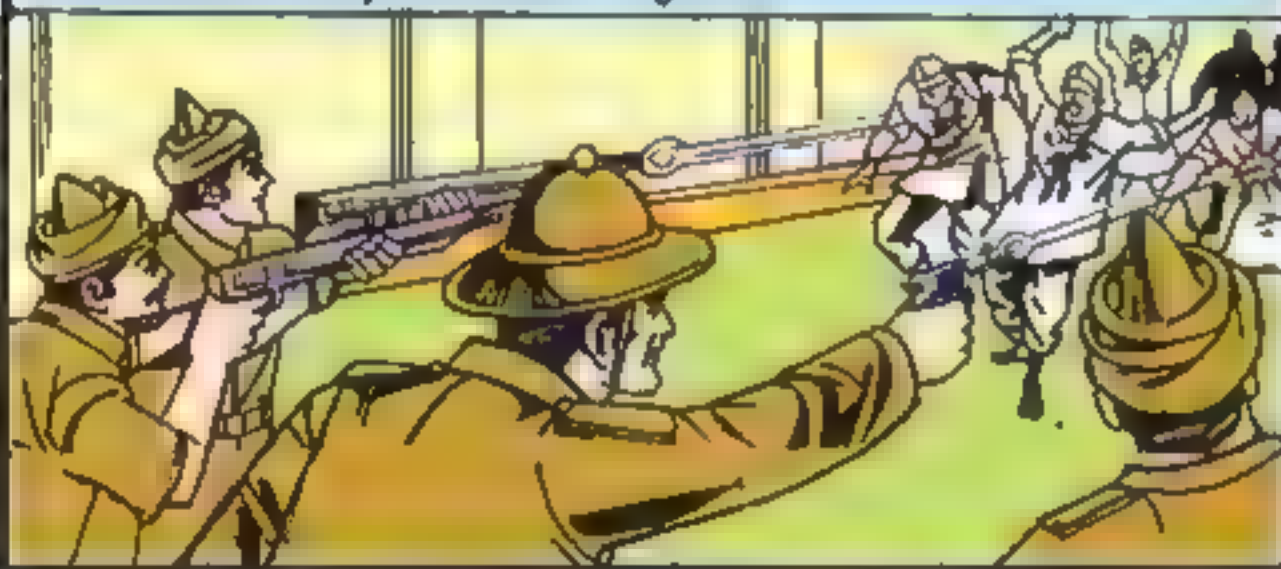
Soon, Balan was deeply involved in the movement—writing and distributing pamphlets and giving speeches.



The British quelled the movement with whips, guns and arrests.



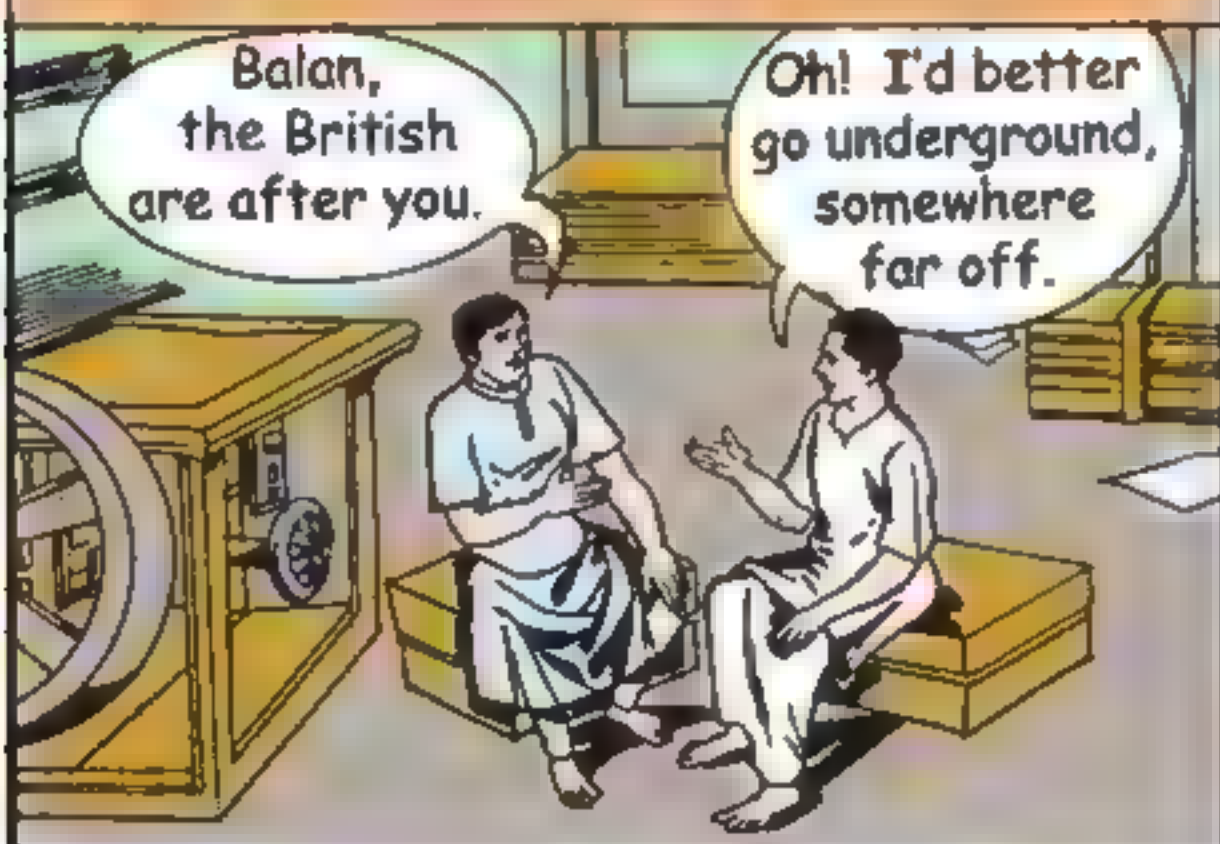
Within a week, hundreds were dead and thousands imprisoned in jails.



Get those students! Especially that Madras! He is causing the maximum trouble.

Menon was from Kerala and therefore a Malayali but referring to all South Indians as Madrasis was a common practice.

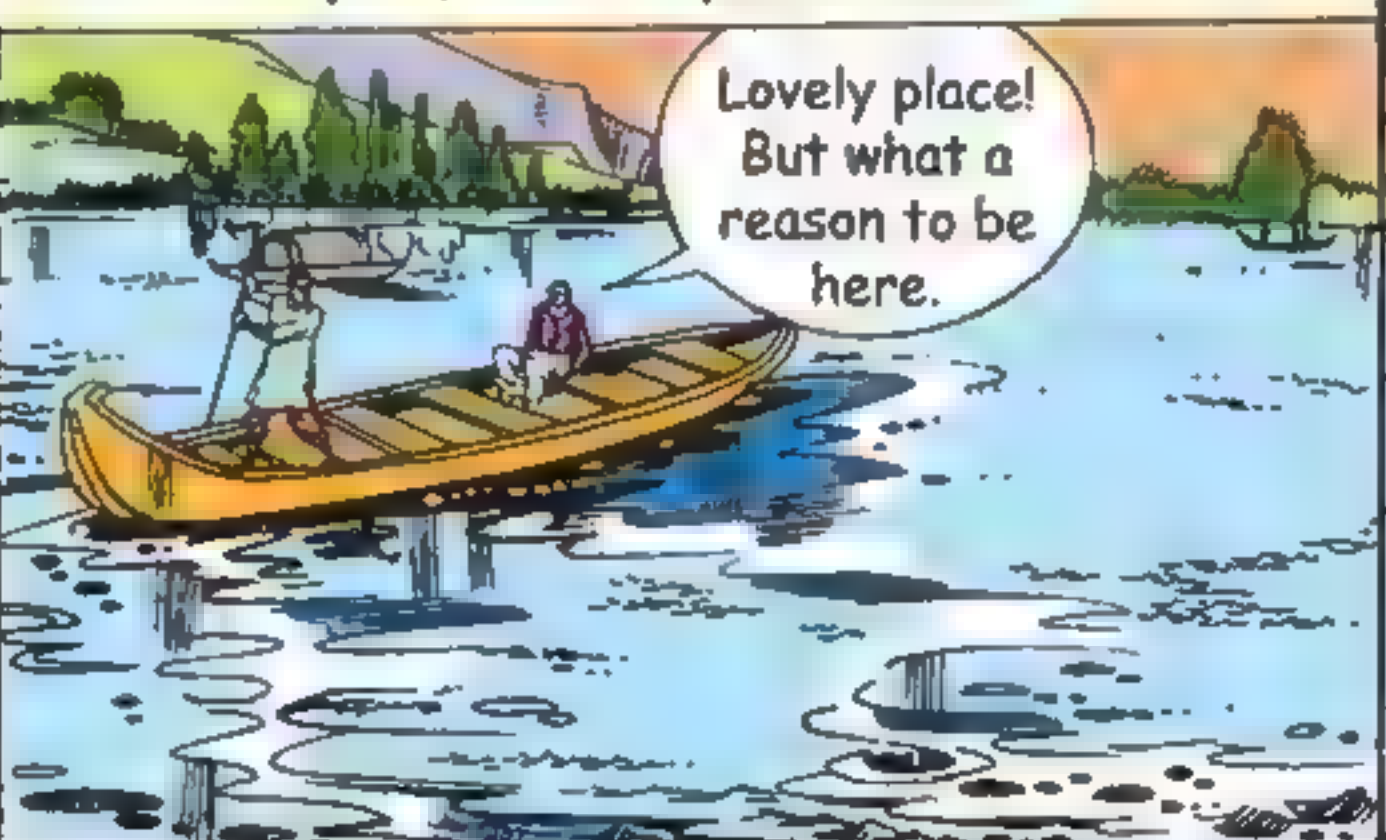
News of his imminent arrest reached Balan.



Balan, the British are after you.

Oh! I'd better go underground, somewhere far off.

For a whole year, Balan stayed in Kashmir.



Lovely place! But what a reason to be here.



He was constantly on the move to avoid causing suspicion. Only occasionally did he travel to Delhi to meet Shroff.

Whew! What a pleasure to have a good meal and wear fresh clothes.

Well! Eat, while I tell you the latest political developments



But these journeys were not very safe. Once on the way to Delhi by bus in Abbottabad

Did anyone see a Madras enter here?

Oh no! I'd better get off.



In the strange town, he had nowhere to go. Then he saw a sign.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN



Gosh! I do need to earn! Let me try my luck!

It was the office of the British Military Intelligence Communication Centre. Menon pretended to be a young man looking for a job.

He was hired immediately as a machine operator for relaying coded messages.

Young man! You are good at your job. Too good! Why did you settle for this job?

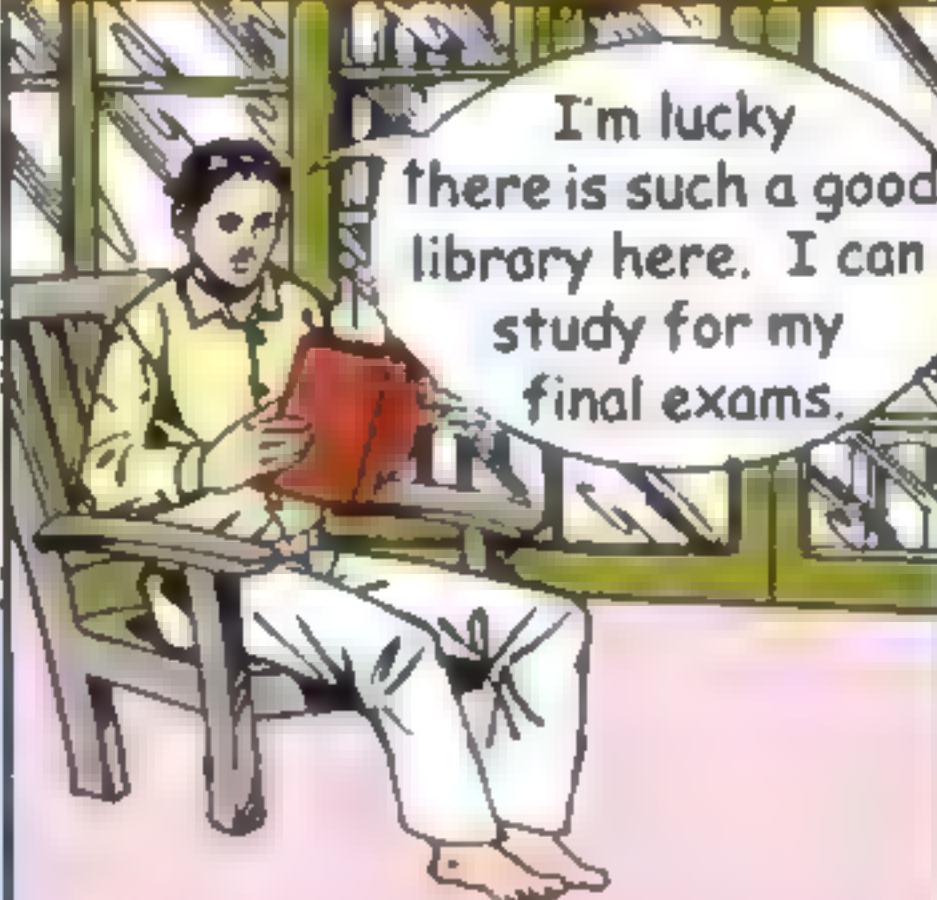
Dare I trust him?



He confided in his boss, who was luckily supportive and made Balan his personal assistant, with a good salary and a safe place to stay in the military compound.

It was a comfortable life, and the work was light, so he got plenty of time to read and think.

I'm lucky there is such a good library here. I can study for my final exams.



The military dining hall offered him an enjoyable interlude with good company. One day —

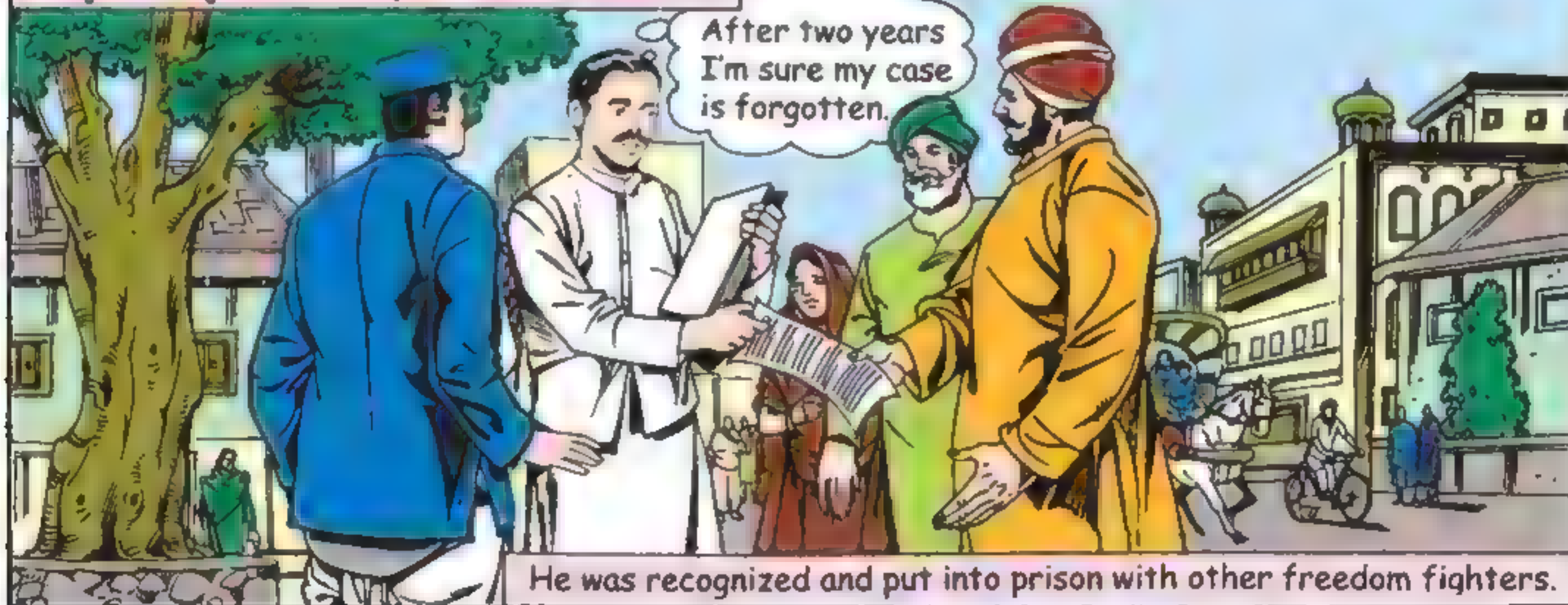
The Air Force is conducting an exam for pilot-training in Cochin. You can try too.



Much to his disappointment, he was disqualified because of poor eyesight.

After eight months of service, Balan had saved some money. He now left the job and joined the Quit India movement.

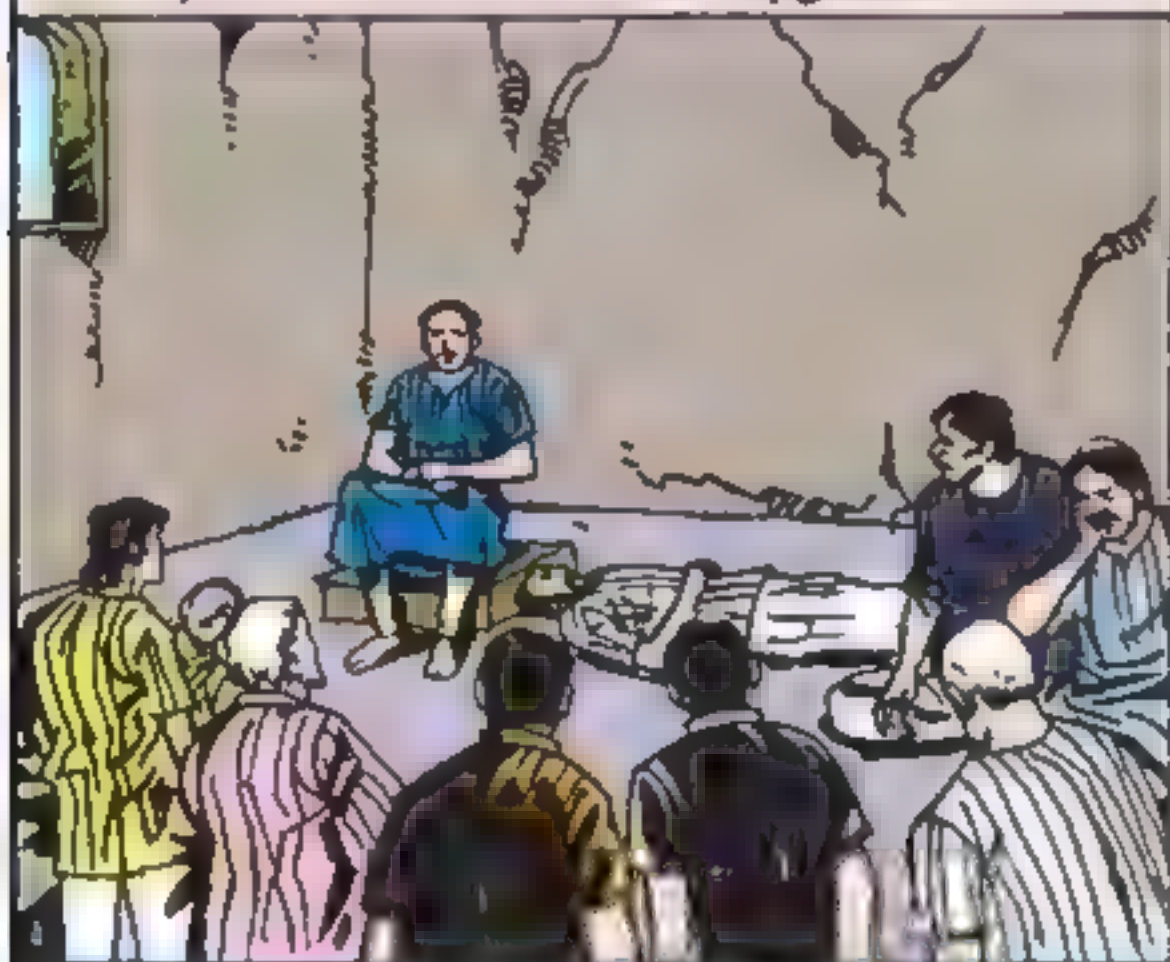
After two years I'm sure my case is forgotten.



He was recognized and put into prison with other freedom fighters.

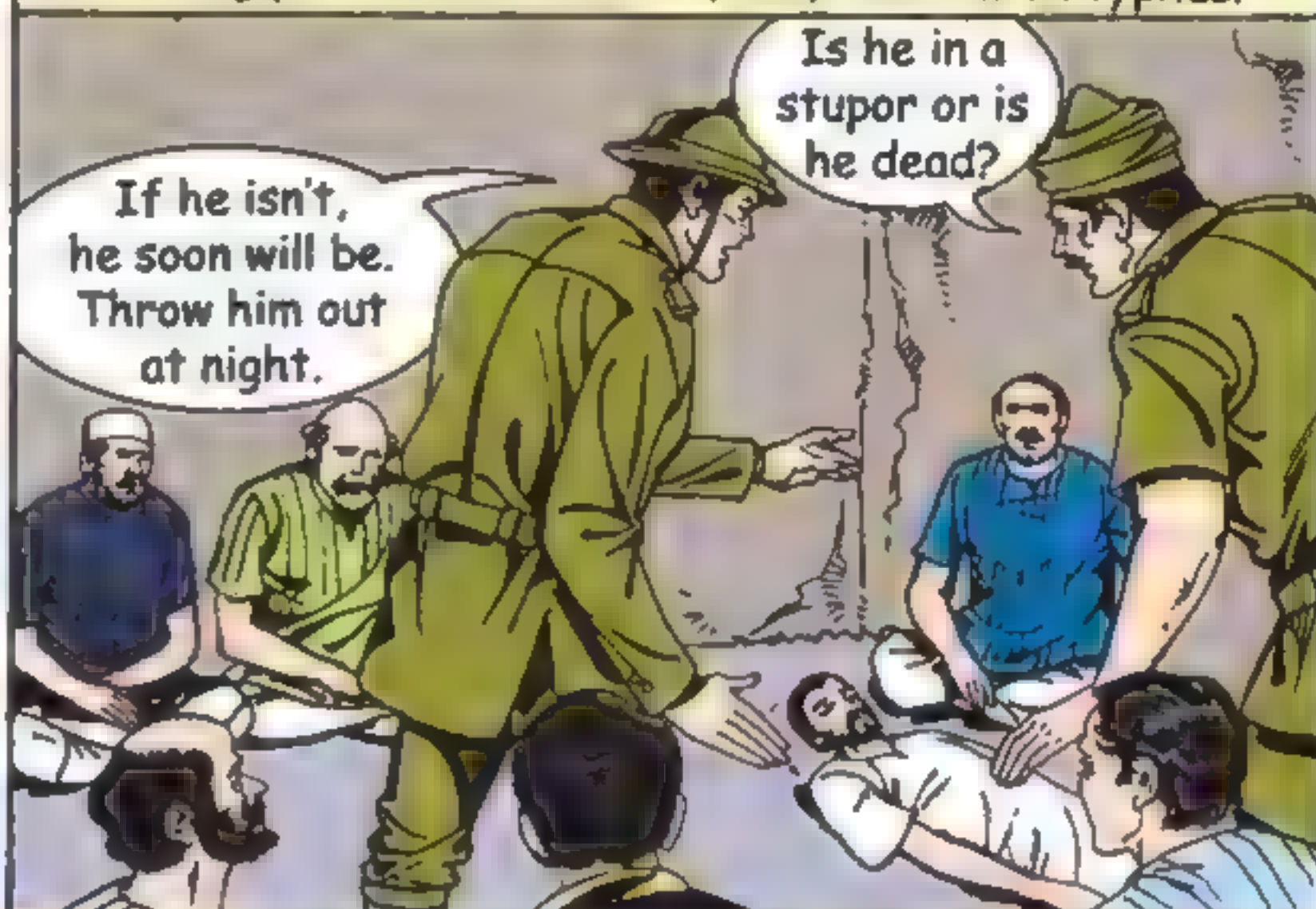


Balan was confined to a cold, dark cell with poor food and little hygiene.



Disease was rampant and many political prisoners died each day.

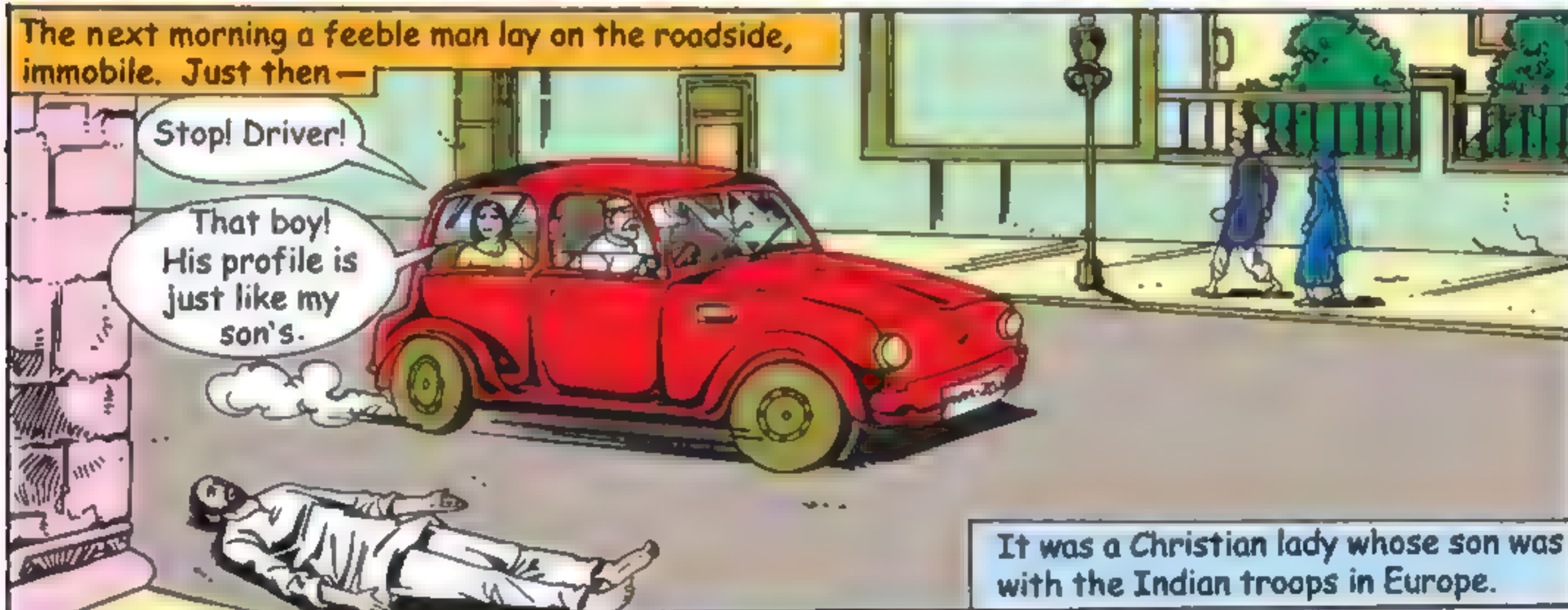
The British did not want to admit or deal with the increasing prison deaths. Balan, too, fell ill with typhus.



If he isn't, he soon will be. Throw him out at night.

Is he in a stupor or is he dead?

The next morning a feeble man lay on the roadside, immobile. Just then —



Stop! Driver!

That boy! His profile is just like my son's.

It was a Christian lady whose son was with the Indian troops in Europe.

She saw the man was in rags, burning with fever, but alive.



Not my son... but somebody's son. I must help him.

She took him home and gave him proper food and medicine and looked after him like her own son.

After several weeks, Balan recovered and could move about.



I can never thank you enough for saving my life. But now I must leave.

It's not safe for you. That's why I refused to let you go to the hospital. Where will you go?

Balan convinced her that he would be all right.



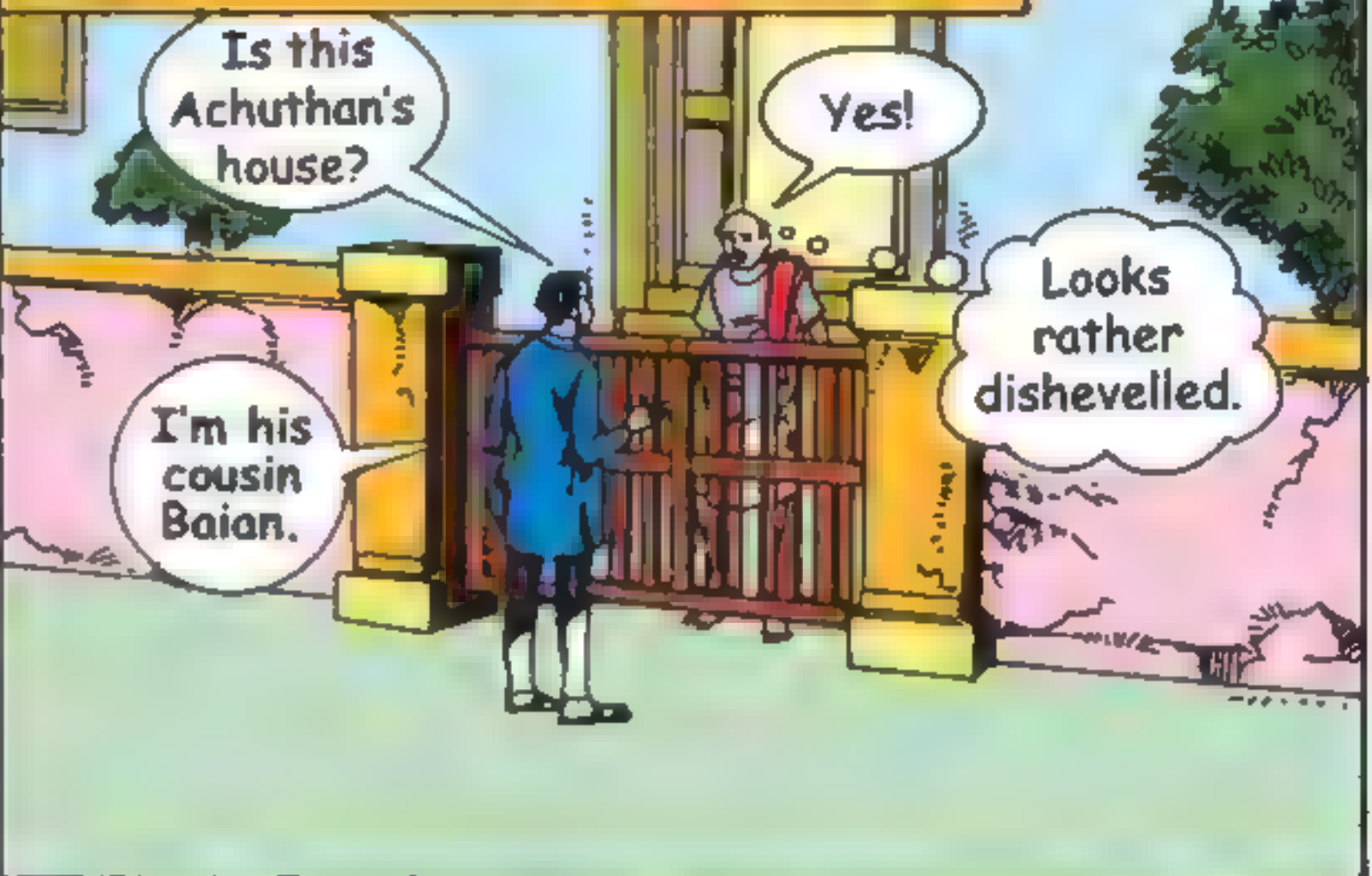
Dressed in an old suit of his saviour's son, he caught a train to Baroda.



How strange life is! Saved by the nose! It reminded her of her soldier son.

The kind lady hardly realised that she had saved the life of a future Hindu sage who would become a renowned global teacher.

In Baroda lived his cousin Achutha Menon, a forest officer who was away at work when Balan arrived at his house.



Is this Achuthan's house?

Yes!

Looks rather dishevelled.

I'm his cousin Balan.

The servant made Balan wait outside. All afternoon, Balan lingered at the gate. In the evening-



Achu!

Balan! You look like a ghost.

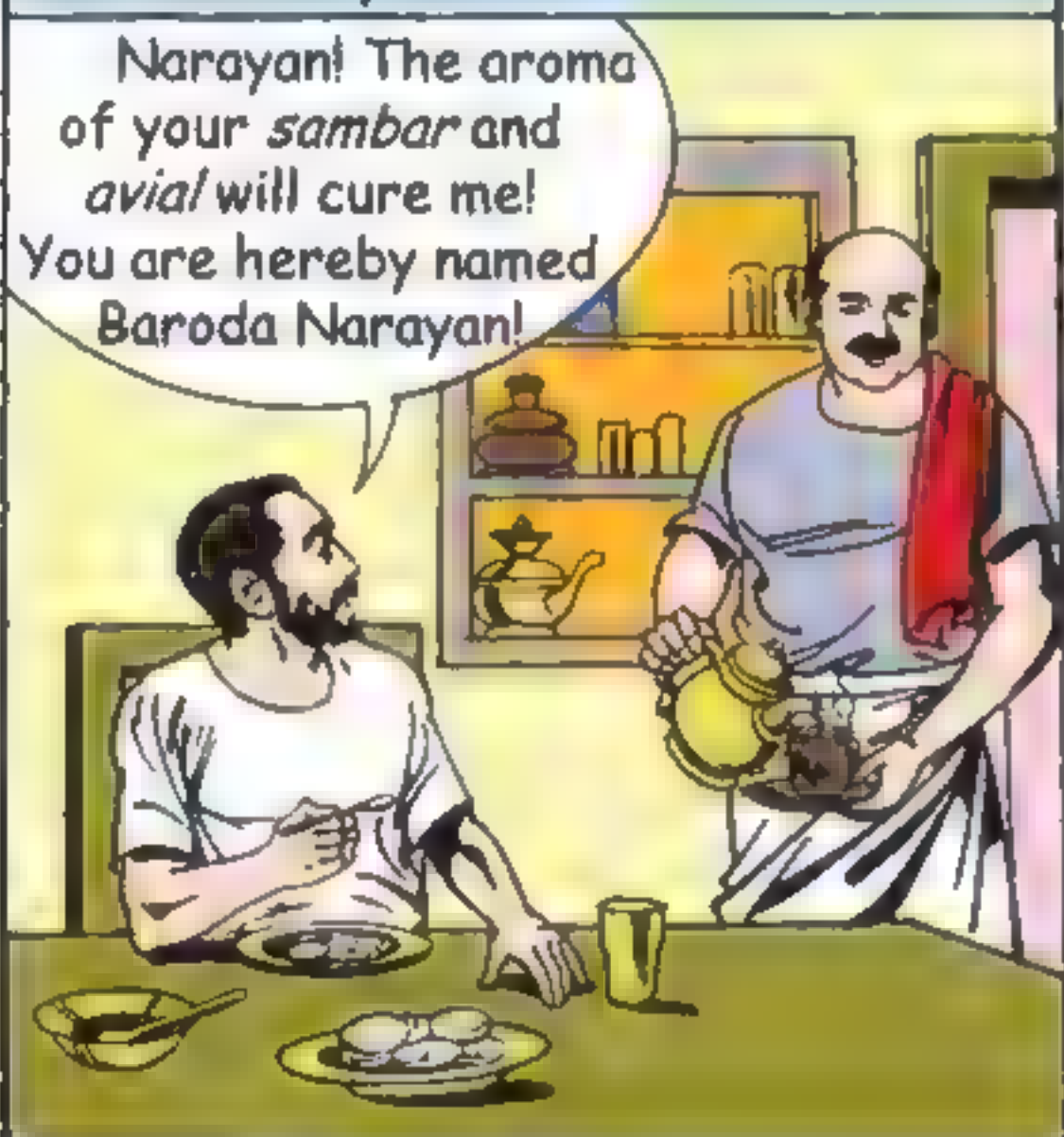
Balan narrated to his cousin all his adventures.

Of course you can stay here for as long as you like! But I am away most of the time on field work. Narayan can look after you.



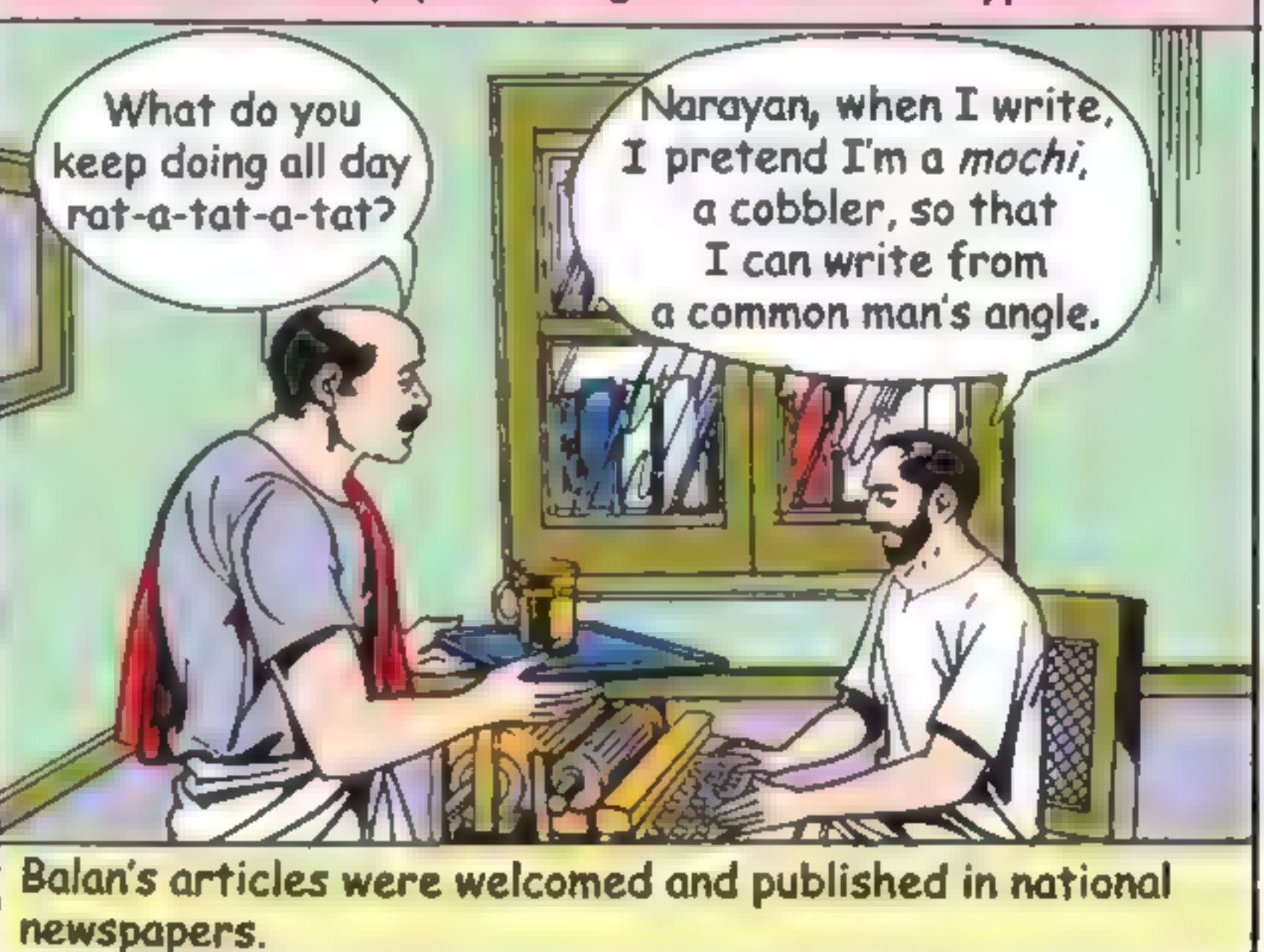
Sahib! I will.

Narayan plied Balan with fruits and milk and Kerala cuisine typical of his childhood days.



Narayan! The aroma of your *sambar* and *avial* will cure me! You are hereby named Baroda Narayan!

With a lot of time on hand, Balan began to write articles for newspapers, using Achutha's old typewriter.



What do you keep doing all day rat-a-tat-a-tat?

Narayan, when I write, I pretend I'm a *mochi*, a cobbler, so that I can write from a common man's angle.

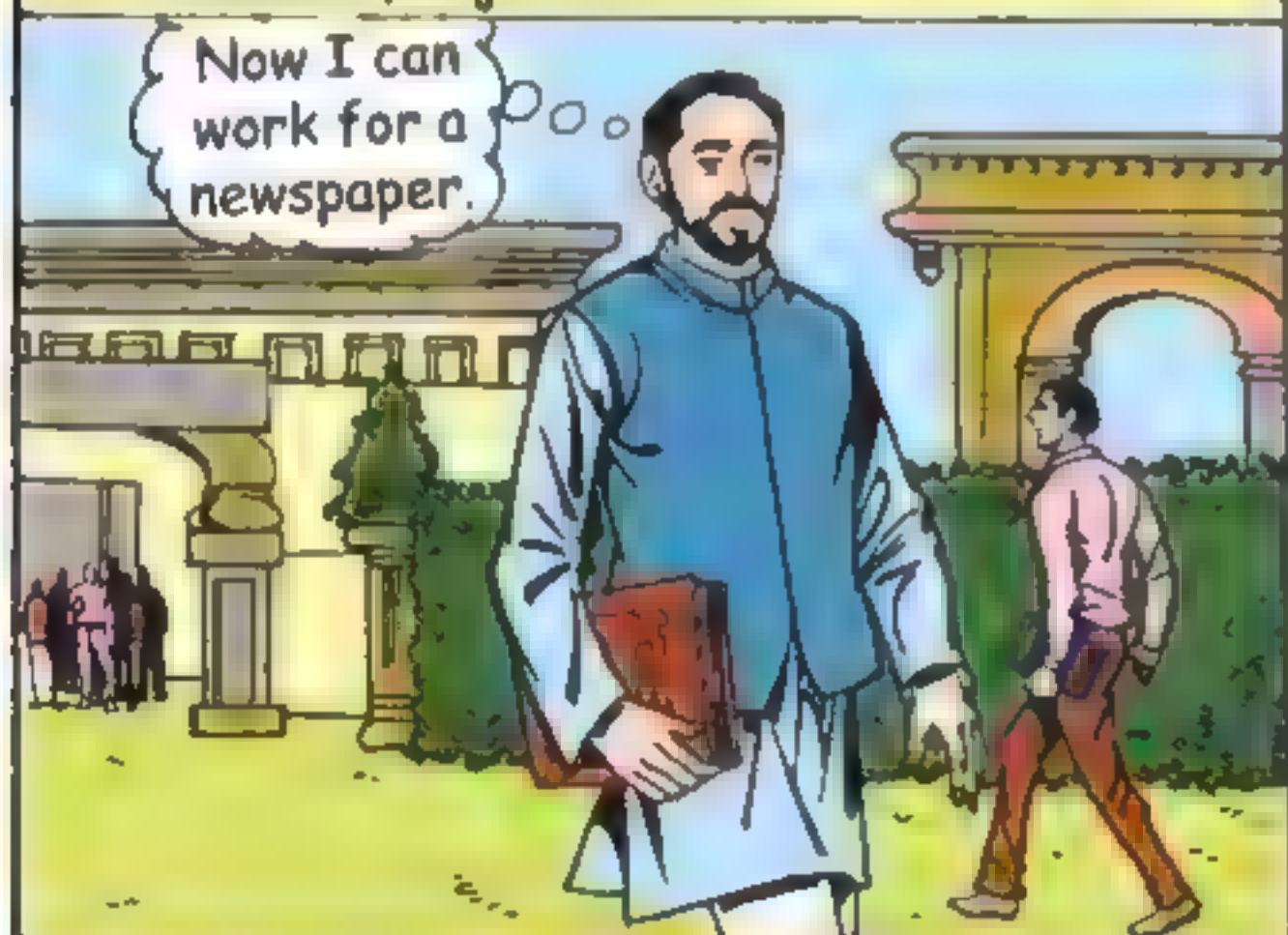
Balan's articles were welcomed and published in national newspapers.



It was his writing that fetched him money, but it was reading that gave meaning to his life. Looking for reading matter, he found some magazines belonging to Achuthan's wife, who was away.



As soon as he was fit, he went back to Lucknow and completed his Master's degree in English, with honours, in journalism.

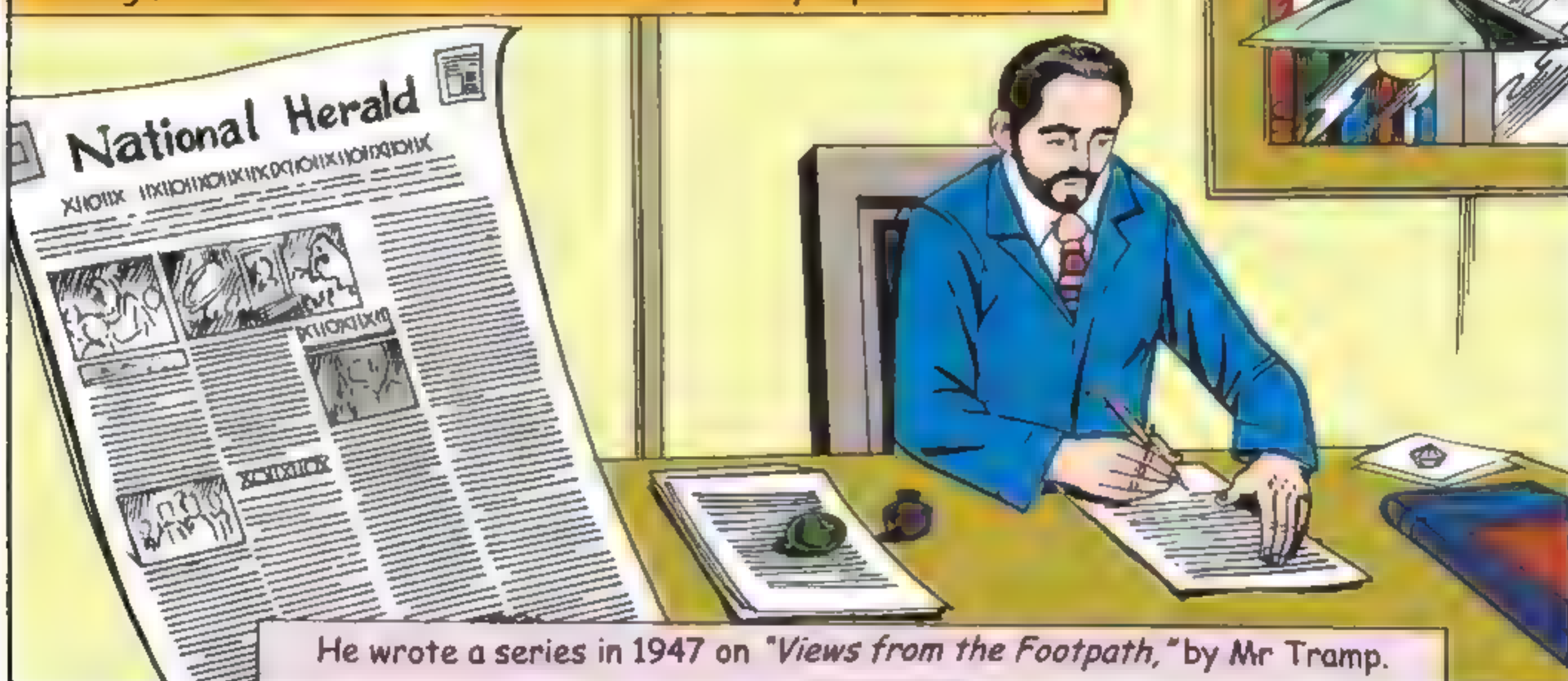


Balan went to Bombay to join a newspaper, and quickly learnt all the areas of work.



His ideas were radical. He soon left the paper and returned to Delhi, the centre of political activity.

He worked for the National Herald, the newspaper started by Jawaharlal Nehru. Menon, as he was now called, was a man about town, wearing fashionable suits. Yet he wrote about every aspect of life.





Fascinated by his wit and intelligence, the wealthy often invited him to their gatherings.

What a hollow life!  
So unsatisfactory.



Throughout the day he was engrossed in his work. However, the evenings found him studying philosophy.

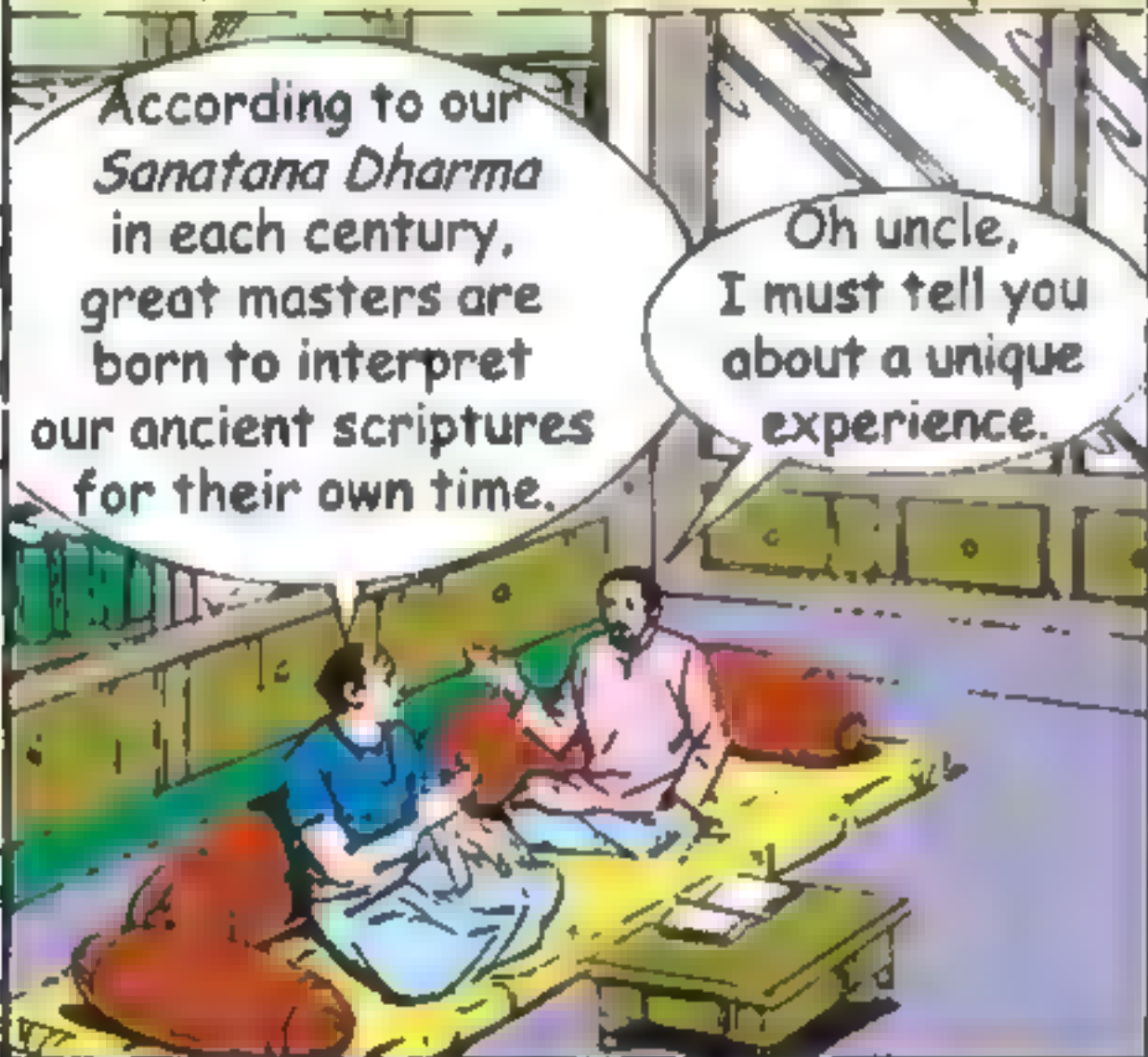


There was unrest in his heart, which led him to return to his childhood mantra – *Om Namah Shivaya*.

He was living with his uncle V.K. Govinda Menon, who was a scholar of the scriptures.

According to our *Sanatana Dharma* in each century, great masters are born to interpret our ancient scriptures for their own time.

Oh uncle, I must tell you about a unique experience.



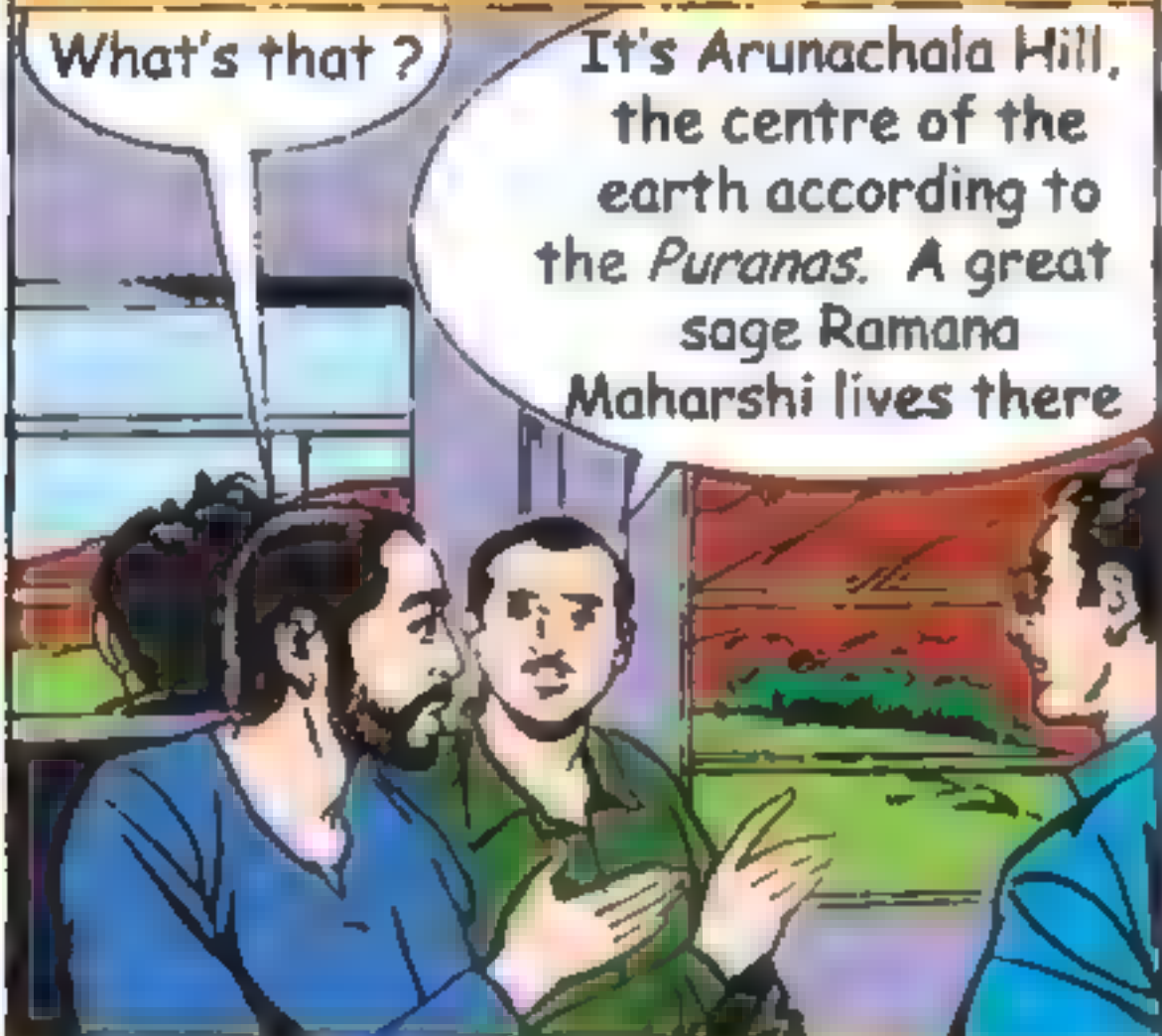
"Some years ago, in 1936, I got a student railway pass to travel all over South India. I travelled at random, talking to people, exploring, enjoying myself thoroughly."



"At a desolate place, I saw a barren red mountain, which everyone in the train rushed to the windows to see."

What's that?

It's Arunachala Hill, the centre of the earth according to the *Puranas*. A great sage Ramana Maharshi lives there

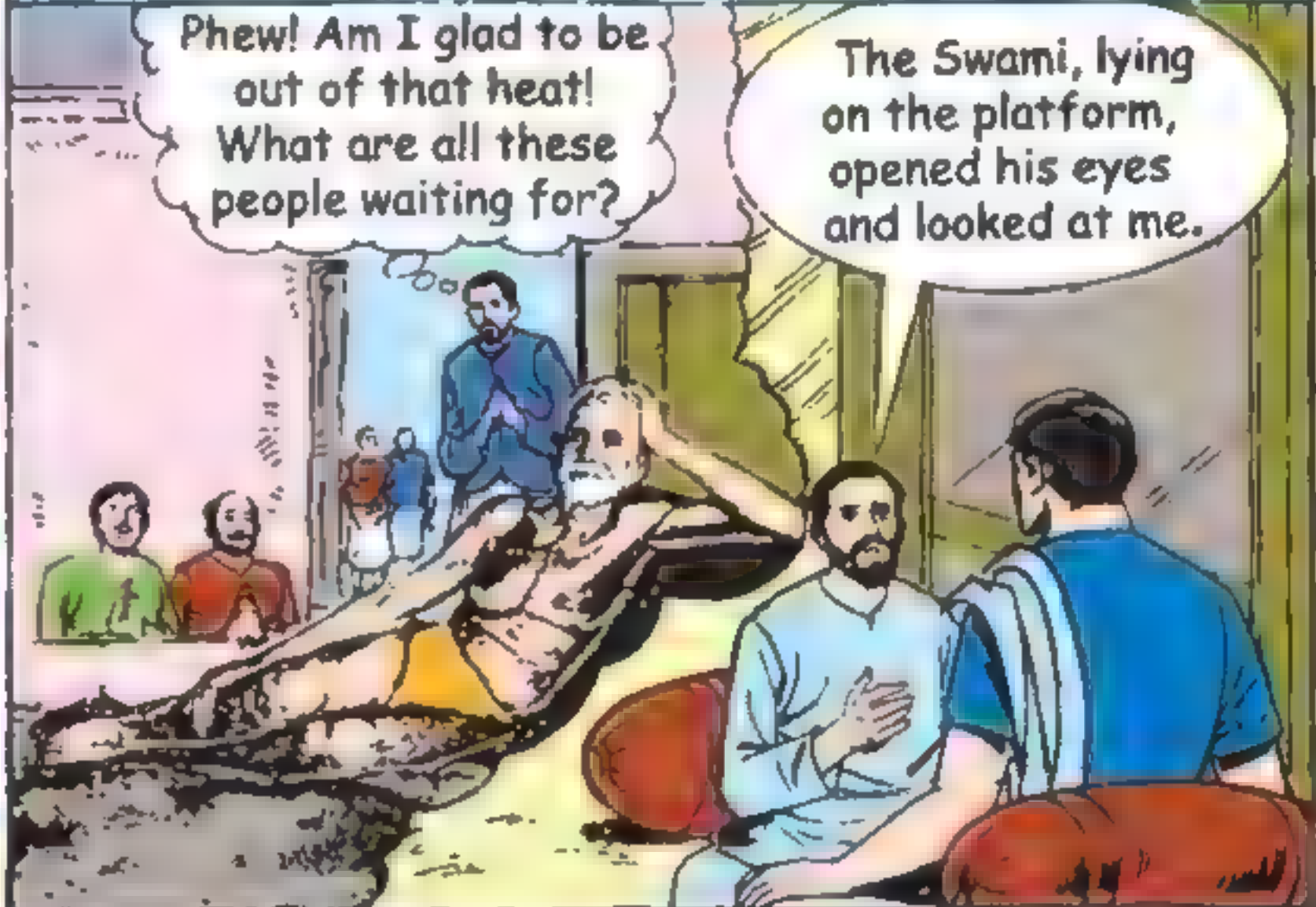


"I was curious and decided to get off."

"It was a hot day in June and I was glad to reach the large, thatched hut after plodding on foot for hours. In the dark I saw a form on a raised platform."

Phew! Am I glad to be out of that heat! What are all these people waiting for?

The Swami, lying on the platform, opened his eyes and looked at me.





I still recall that feeling—  
as if my whole life had  
gone up in a wave.  
It was quite some  
time before I recovered  
enough to move.

That was  
Ramana Maharshi,  
Balan, a great  
sage of profound  
wisdom.

It was only later that Balan understood  
this experience.

On the other hand, he noticed many *sadhus* ignorant  
about the lofty Hindu ideals. In the summer of 1947  
Balakrishna Menon set out for Rishikesh in the  
Himalayas —

I'm going to find out  
how those holy men  
are keeping up  
the bluff!

You are going  
to interview  
sages? God help  
them.

Balan was astonished to observe the life  
at Swami Sivananda's ashram.

It's a tough life. Swamiji  
is so different from  
what I expected. He  
gives such elevating  
spiritual discourses,  
yet humbly serves  
fruits and tea to  
visitors! He  
exudes such  
dynamic peace.

God gave you such  
intelligence! Why  
don't you use it  
for Him? You can  
join us and become  
a *sannyasi*.

I'm not so sure.  
However, I do like your  
formula - serve,  
love, purify, meditate,  
realise and be free.

It was a changed man that returned to Delhi  
and the routine of journalism.

This is almost a  
holiday compared to  
the busy life at  
the ashram.

However, he often returned to Rishikesh

Look, Shroff, they  
have invited me to  
edit a souvenir for  
Swamiji's  
*shashtiabdh  
purti*\*. I certainly  
must go.

So! The sages  
beckon you  
again!

The souvenir was completed in time and even  
after Swami Sivananda's 60th birthday celebra-  
tions, Balan stayed on for a while. One evening—

Come! Say a  
few words!

Who? Me?  
What will I talk  
about? I don't  
know much about  
spirituality. That's  
why I'm here.

So talk of  
anything. Maybe  
your trip  
to Rishikesh.

Well,  
I came from  
Delhi.....

Oh God!  
I can't think  
of a single  
word to say.

Balan found himself completely tongue-tied.



There was a long silence. At last —

Don't worry, you will get another chance.



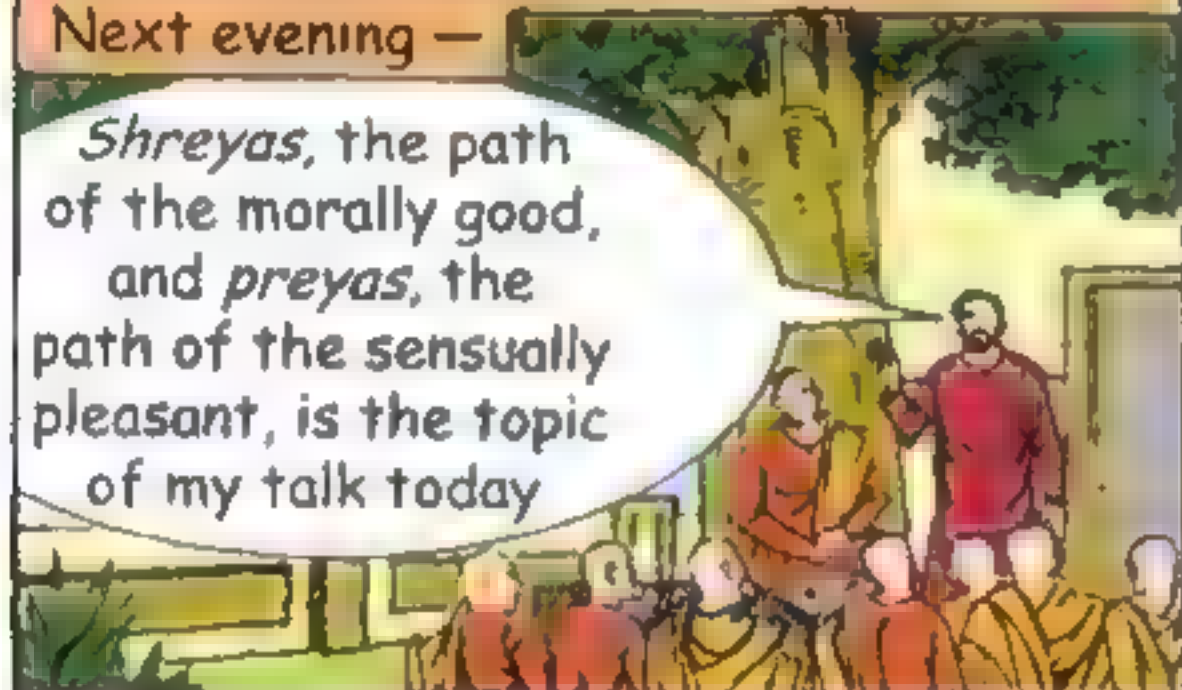
On the way out, Swami Sivananda gently chided him.

What's this? You are a postgraduate, a successful journalist! Can't you give a short impromptu discourse? Get ready for another try tomorrow.



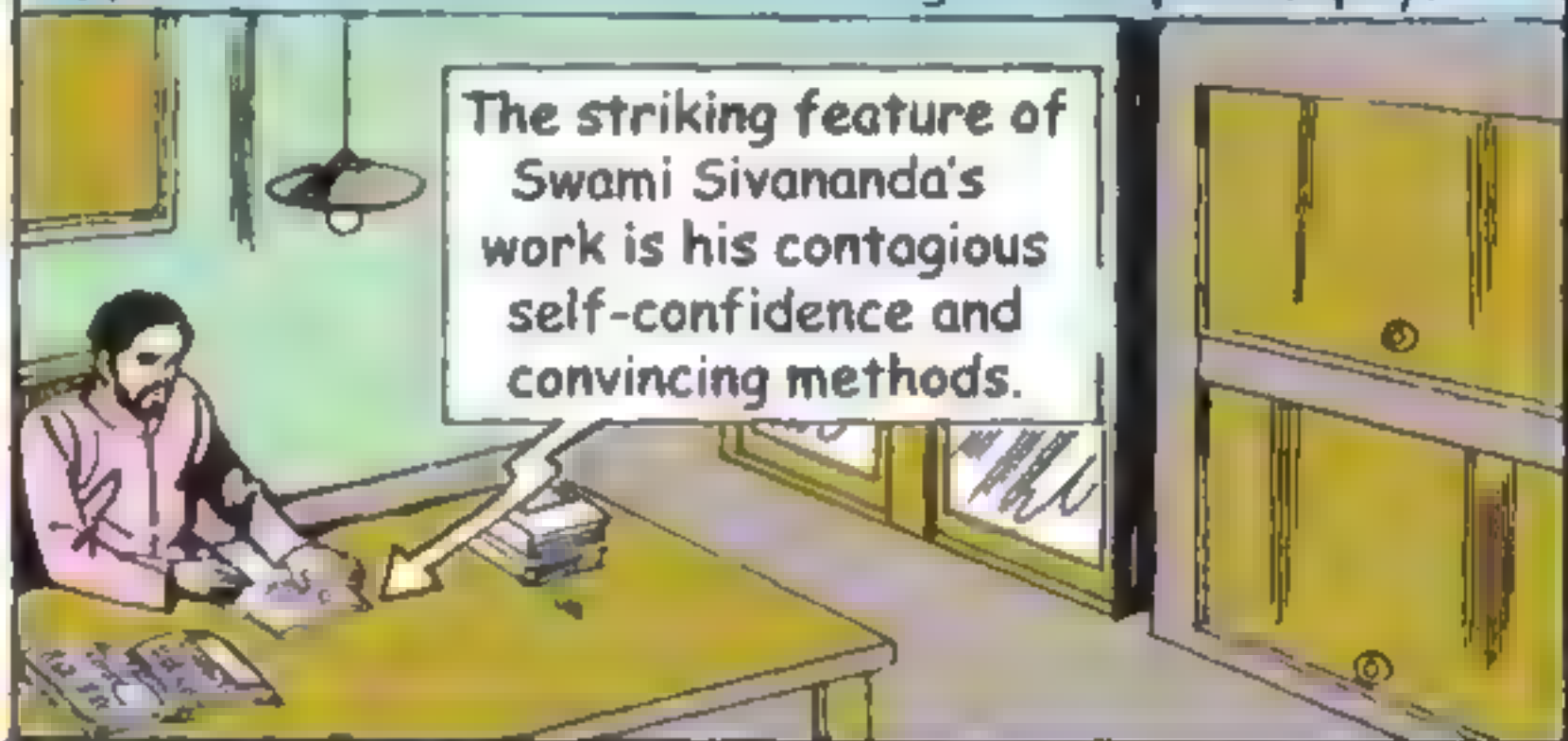
Swamiji gave him a topic to talk on. Next evening —

Shreyas, the path of the morally good, and preyas, the path of the sensually pleasant, is the topic of my talk today



Swami Sivananda had launched Bala-krishna Menon on a lifetime work of delivering succinct spiritual discourses.

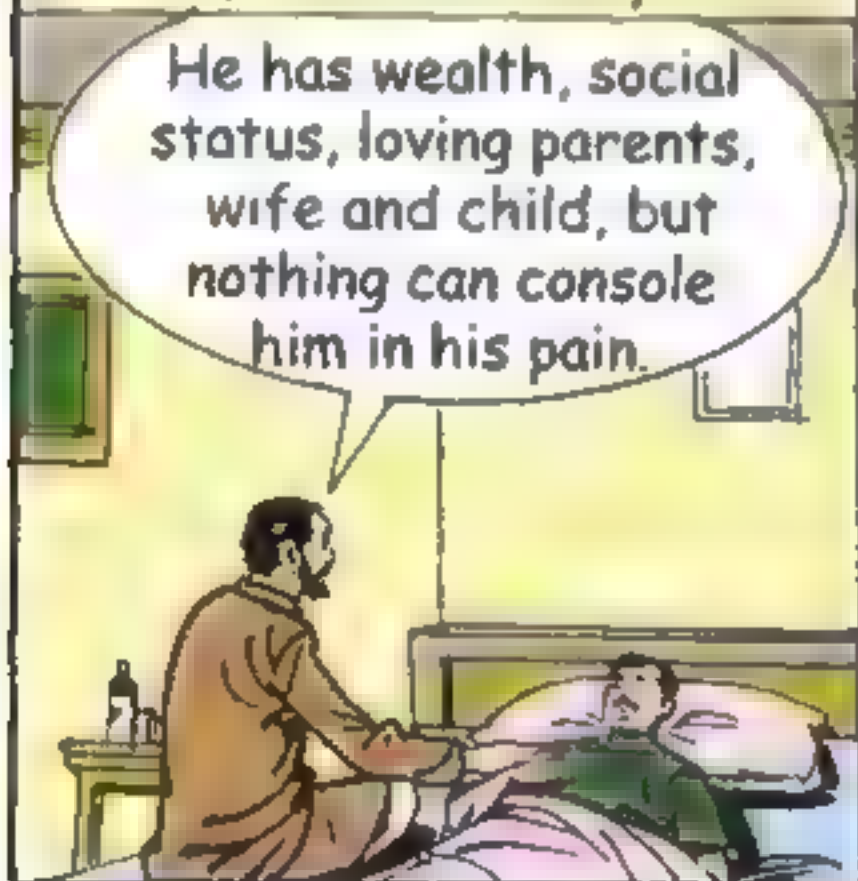
When he left for Delhi, it was with a pile of books by Swami Sivananda. In his newspaper column there now appeared reviews of books on religion and philosophy.



The striking feature of Swami Sivananda's work is his contagious self-confidence and convincing methods.

In Delhi, his long-time friend, Shroff, was terminally ill.

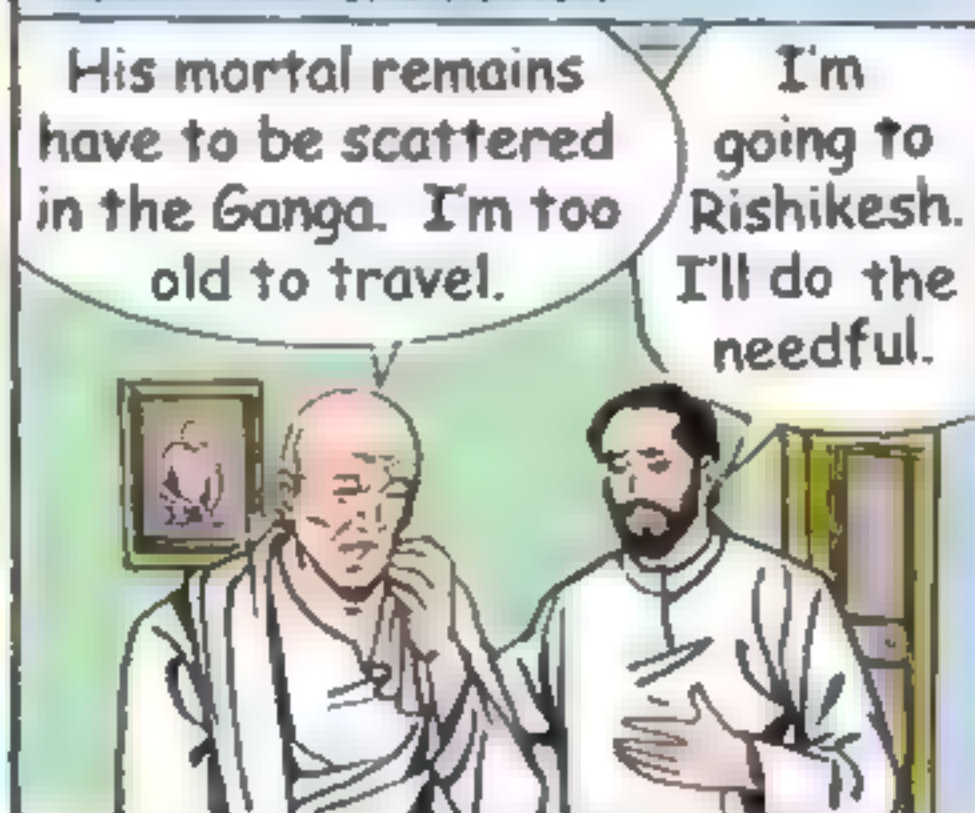
He has wealth, social status, loving parents, wife and child, but nothing can console him in his pain.



After years of suffering, Shroff breathed his last. After the cremation —

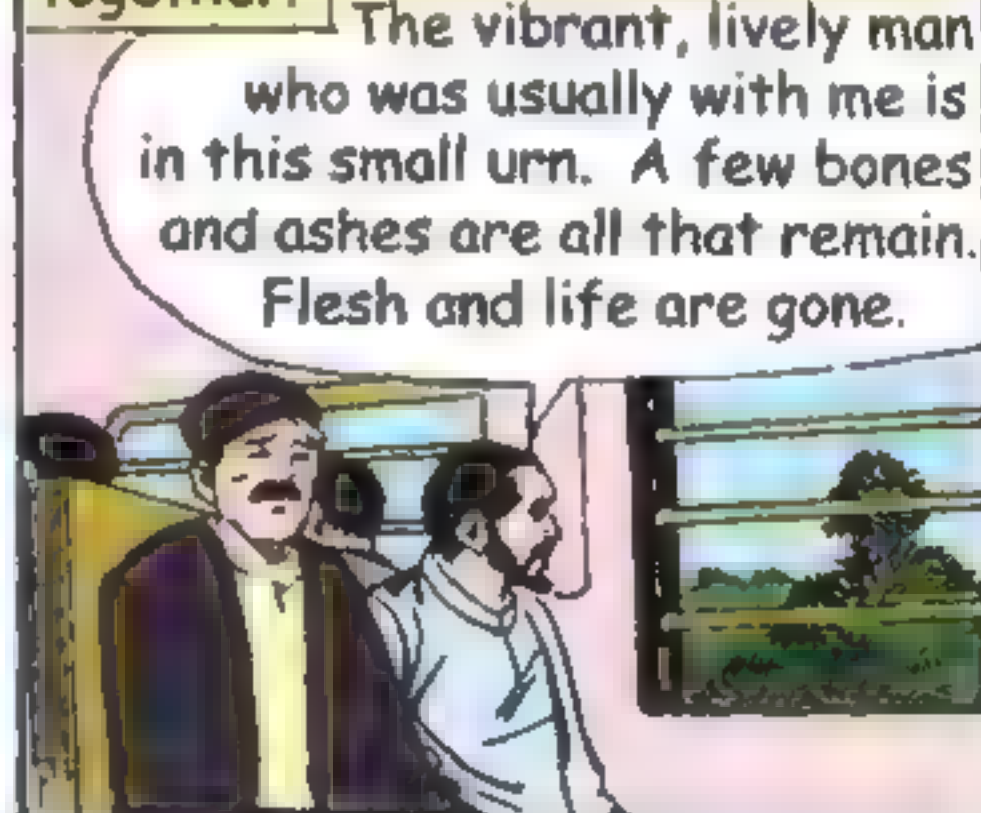
His mortal remains have to be scattered in the Ganga. I'm too old to travel.

I'm going to Rishikesh. I'll do the needful.



The journey by train was one that Balan and Shroff had often made together.

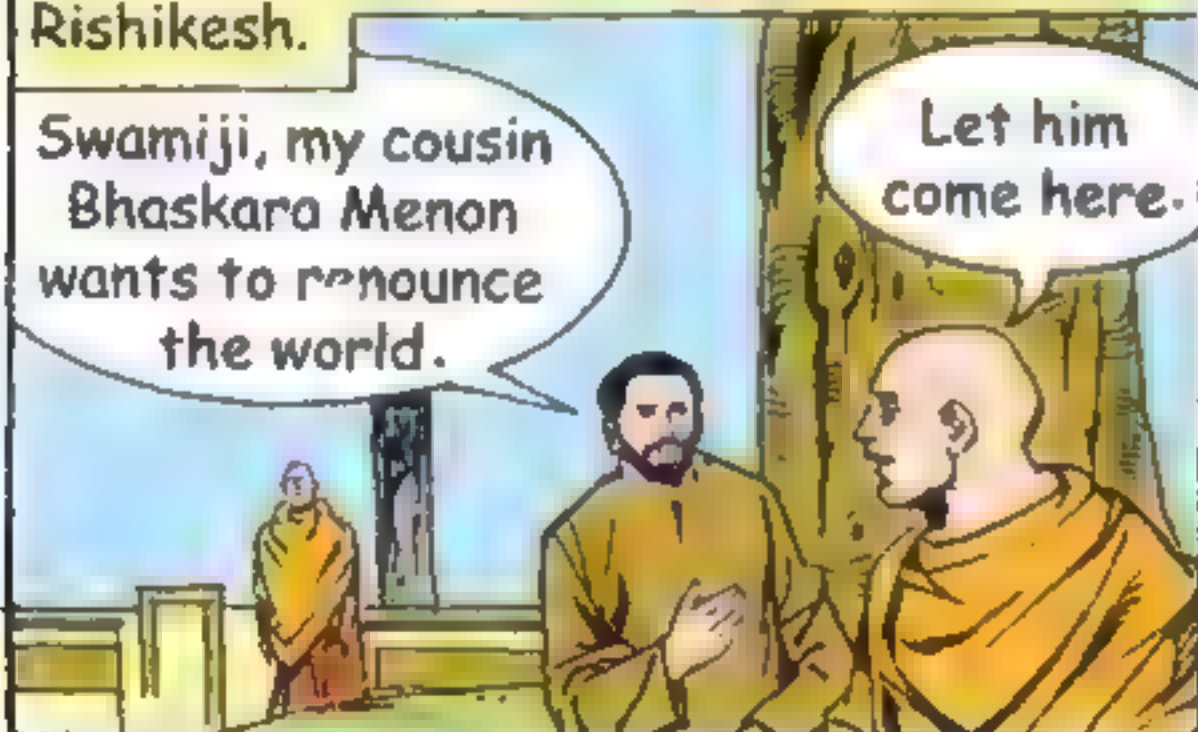
The vibrant, lively man who was usually with me is in this small urn. A few bones and ashes are all that remain. Flesh and life are gone.



Menon divided his time between Rishikesh and Delhi. By 1948, he had settled in Rishikesh.

Swamiji, my cousin Bhaskara Menon wants to renounce the world.

Let him come here.



Bhaskara Menon was received at Rishikesh and initiated as a *sannyasi*

From today, you will be known as Swami Jnanananda

I would like to visit all the famous pilgrimage sites.



He convinced Balan to join him, as a journalist.



On 24th April, 1948, Balan and Swami Jnanananda set out for Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.

Balan, we will reach Yamunotri before your birthday.

Imagine! My 32nd Birthday at 11,000 feet above sea level!

The route passed through Uttarkashi, the dwelling place of Swami Tapovanam, a master of the scriptures.

During your travel, maintain constant reflection on *Brahman*.

It was his first meeting with the great master who would become his guru and mentor.

He lived in a simple hut, without disciples, yet...

Do you need anything? Warm clothes?

Thank you. We have all we need.

Though Balan did not know it then, Swami Tapovanam was familiar with his newspaper articles and reviews.

The trek through Uttarakhand was tiring to the body, but uplifting to the soul. Menon kept a journal of this journey.

As we turned the corner, we heard the inimitable, celestial music of the River Ganga bringing exultation and utter peace.

Two hours of meditation beside the Ganga gave him a taste of bliss

May I drink deeper at the fountain of eternal Divine nectar.

At Badrinath, Balan stayed for the month of July, meeting several holy men. This had a profound influence on the path he chose to follow.

When he returned to Sivananda Ashram in August, he knew he was ready for *sannyasa*.

You must write to your father for permission

He wrote a long letter to his father explaining the events.

The elder Menon was surprised, yet pleased.

At first, he lived like a prince. Now he wants to be a monk.

Will you give your permission?

Certainly. He is doing what I never had the courage to do.

On 25th February, 1949, on Shivaratri day, Balakrishna Menon was initiated into *sannyasa*.

I renounce all desire for wealth, spouse, name or fame.



With five other initiates, he plunged three times into the chilly Ganga water.

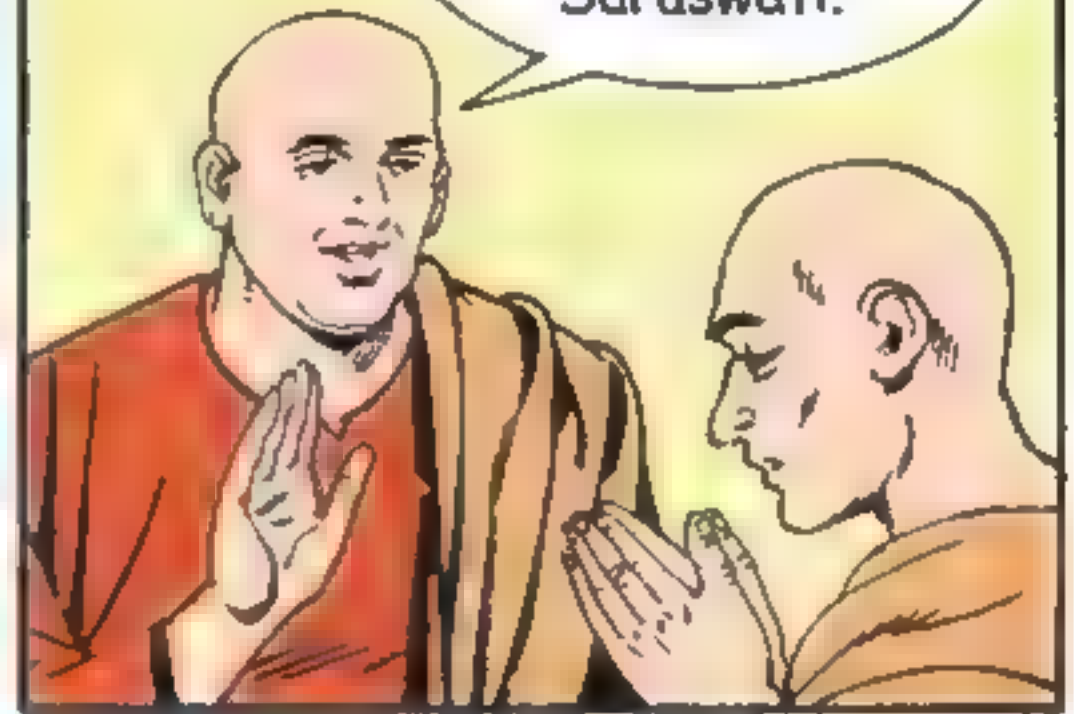
*Bhu sannyastha maya\**

*Bhuva sannyastha maya\*\**

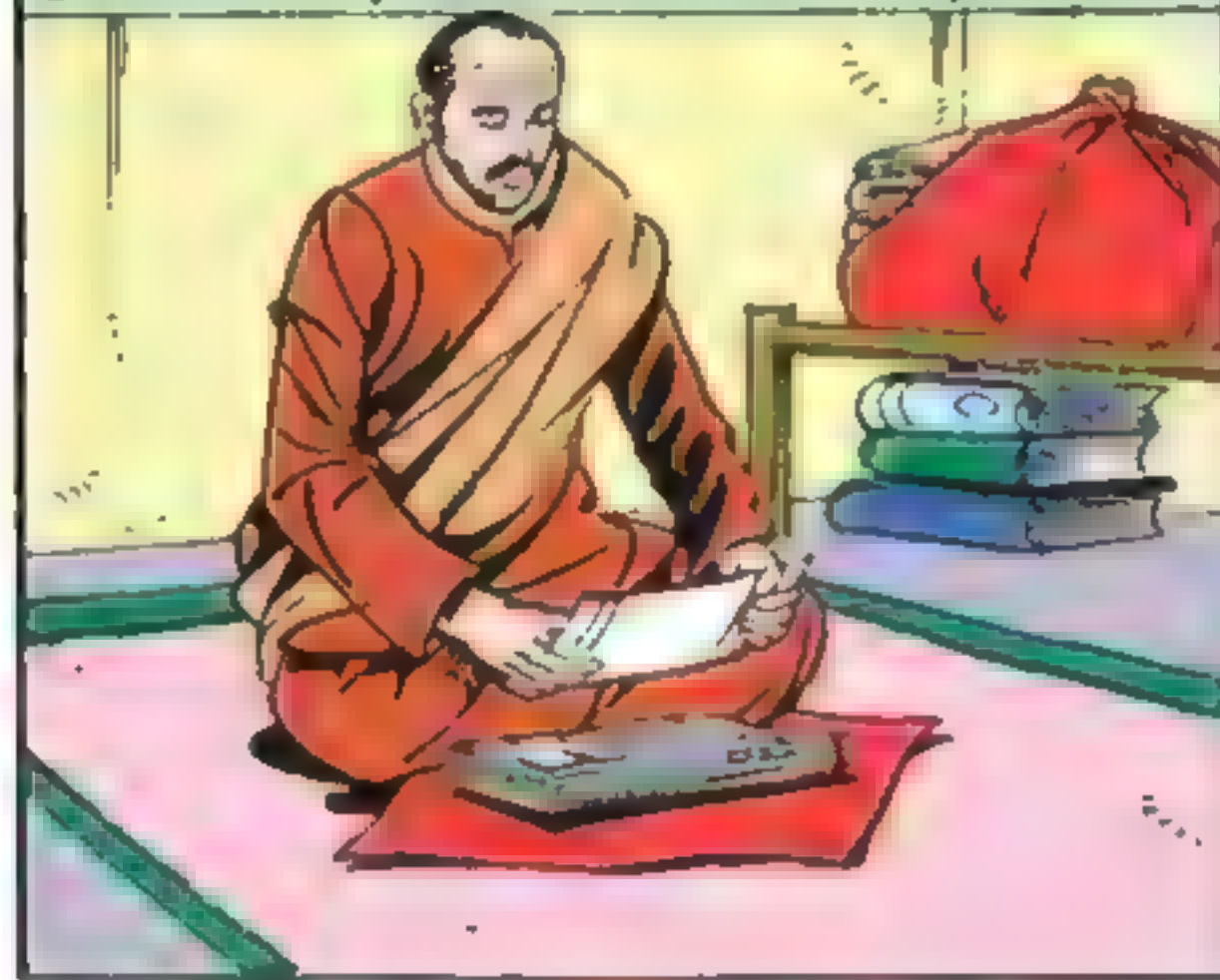
*Sva Sannyastha maya\*\*\**



You will be called Chinmayananda Saraswati.



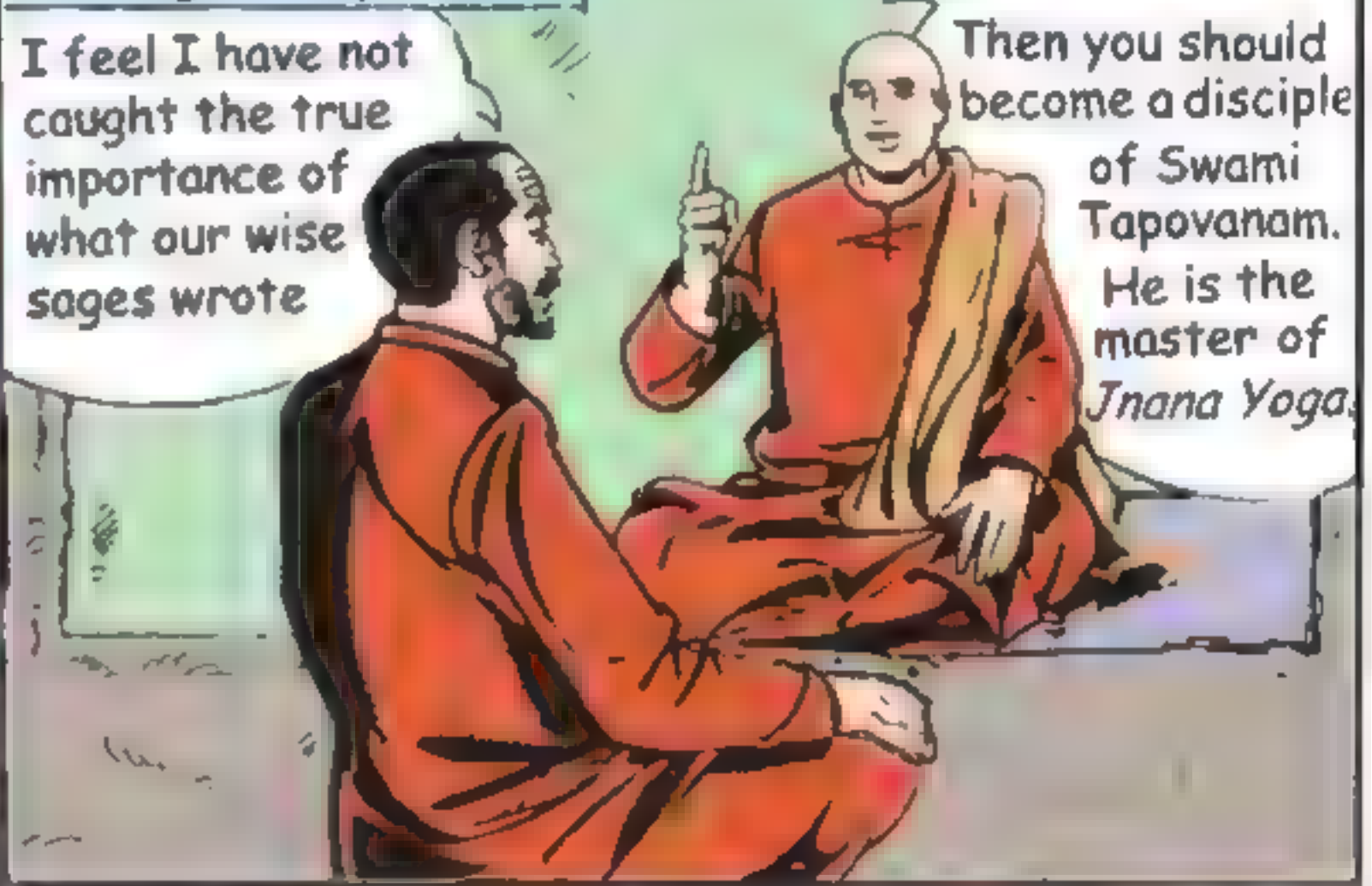
His past life faded like a dream  
Swami Chinmayananda set out to  
gain mastery over the Hindu scriptures



His questioning mind was not satisfied with a mere  
reading of holy books.

I feel I have not  
caught the true  
importance of  
what our wise  
sages wrote

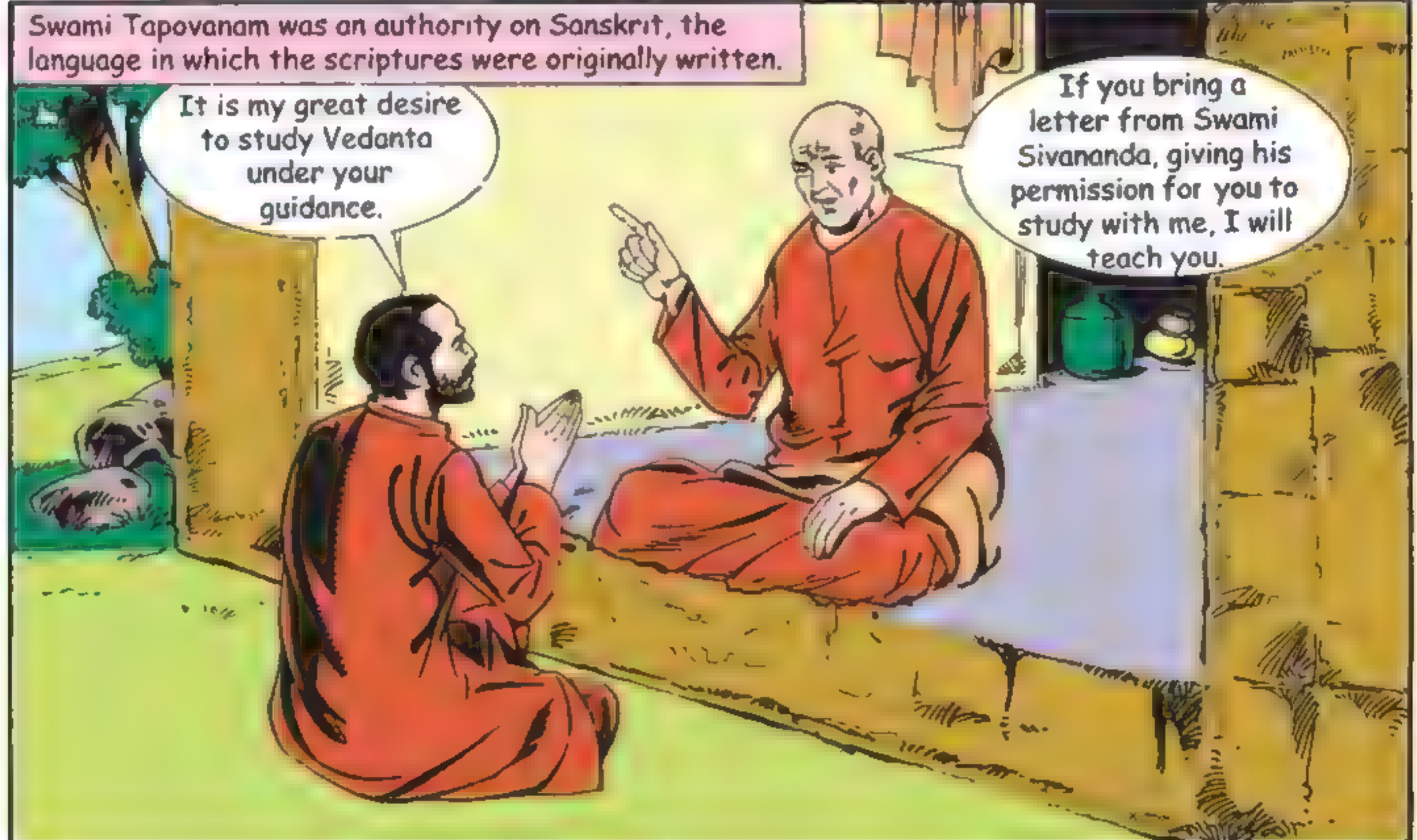
Then you should  
become a disciple  
of Swami  
Tapovanam.  
He is the  
master of  
Jnana Yoga.



Swami Tapovanam was an authority on Sanskrit, the  
language in which the scriptures were originally written.

It is my great desire  
to study Vedanta  
under your  
guidance.

If you bring a  
letter from Swami  
Sivananda, giving his  
permission for you to  
study with me, I will  
teach you.





Swami Chinmayananda walked down the mountains to Rishikesh, obtained the letter giving Swami Sivananda's permission for him to be a disciple of Swami Tapovanam and walked all the way back.



Swami Tapovanam was a loving yet strict teacher who lived an austere life.

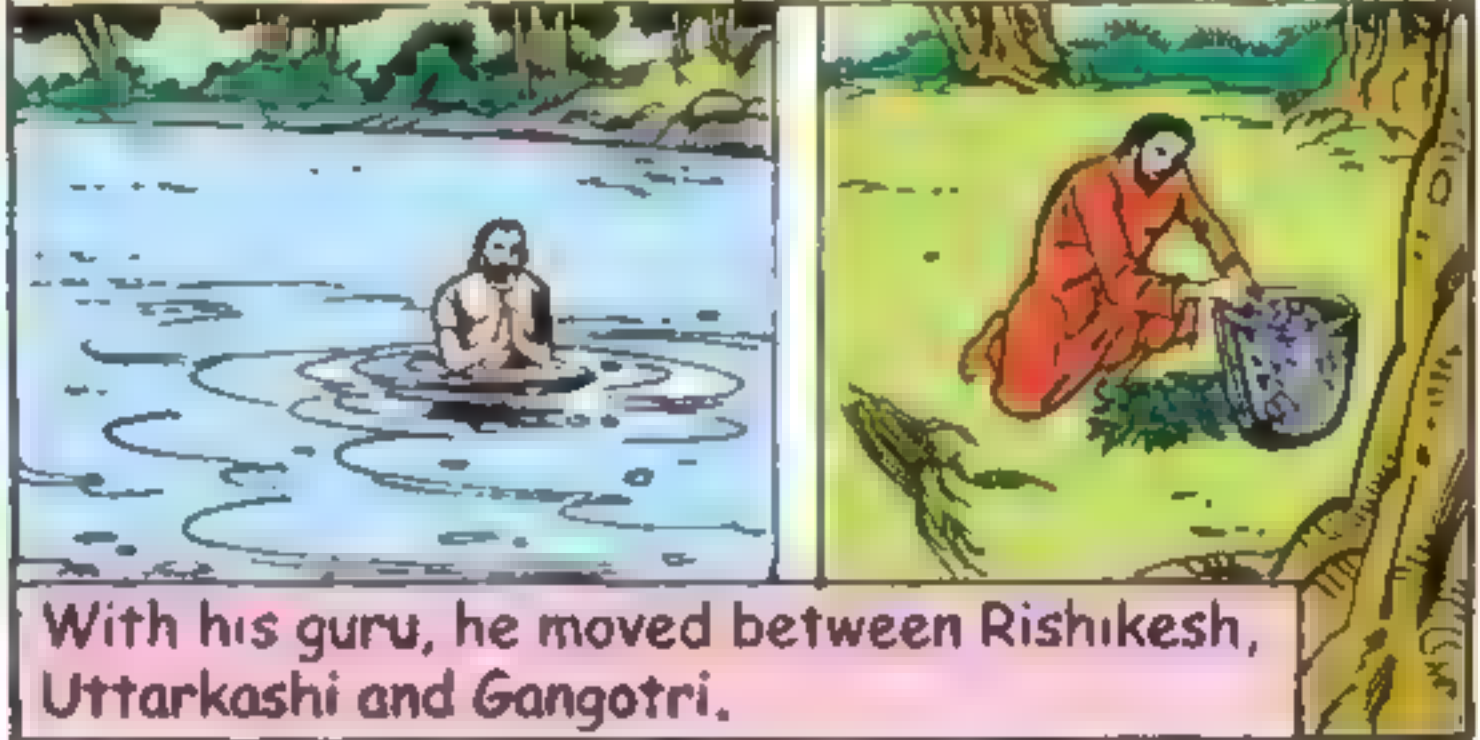
What a contrast to the bustle of Sivananda ashram! He lives in a cowshed with a stone for a pillow!



At 3000 metres above sea level at Gangotri, the committed study began. It was a tough life and demanding, too. If the student did not understand the first time, he would have to leave the class.



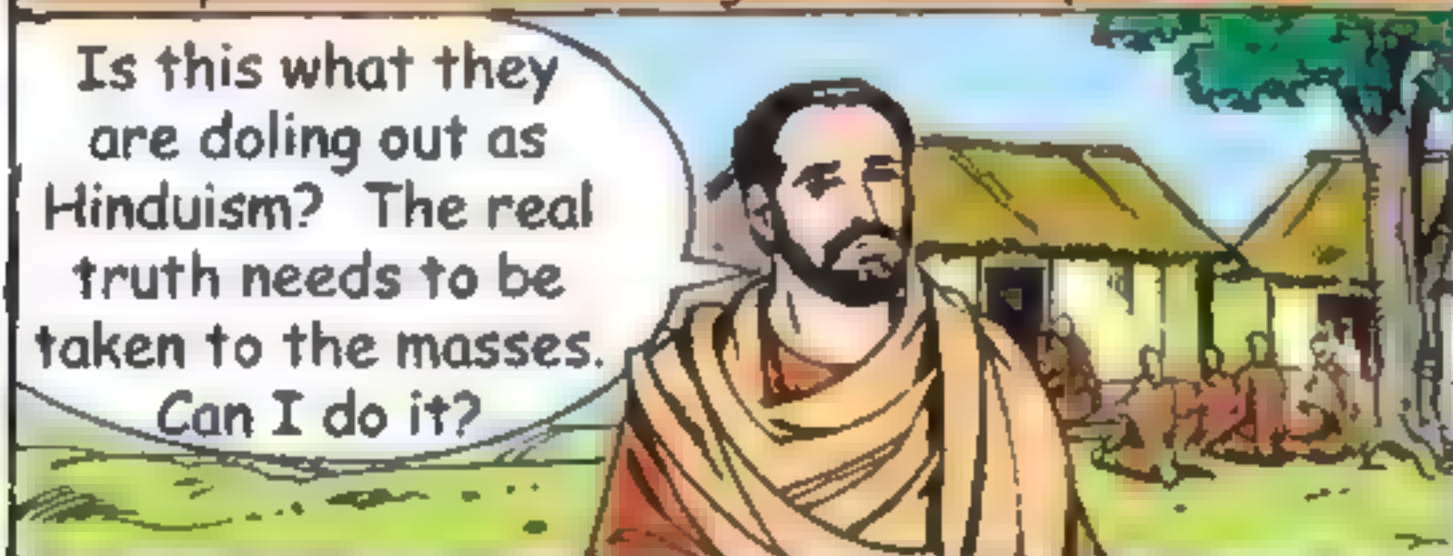
Swami Chinmayananda bathed in the freezing water twice a day, ate the meagre alms he got, did all the chores of the ashram, slept little and studied a lot.



With his guru, he moved between Rishikesh, Uttarkashi and Gangotri.

They often met *sadhus* from cities and towns. Chinmayananda was shocked at their inadequate understanding of the scriptures

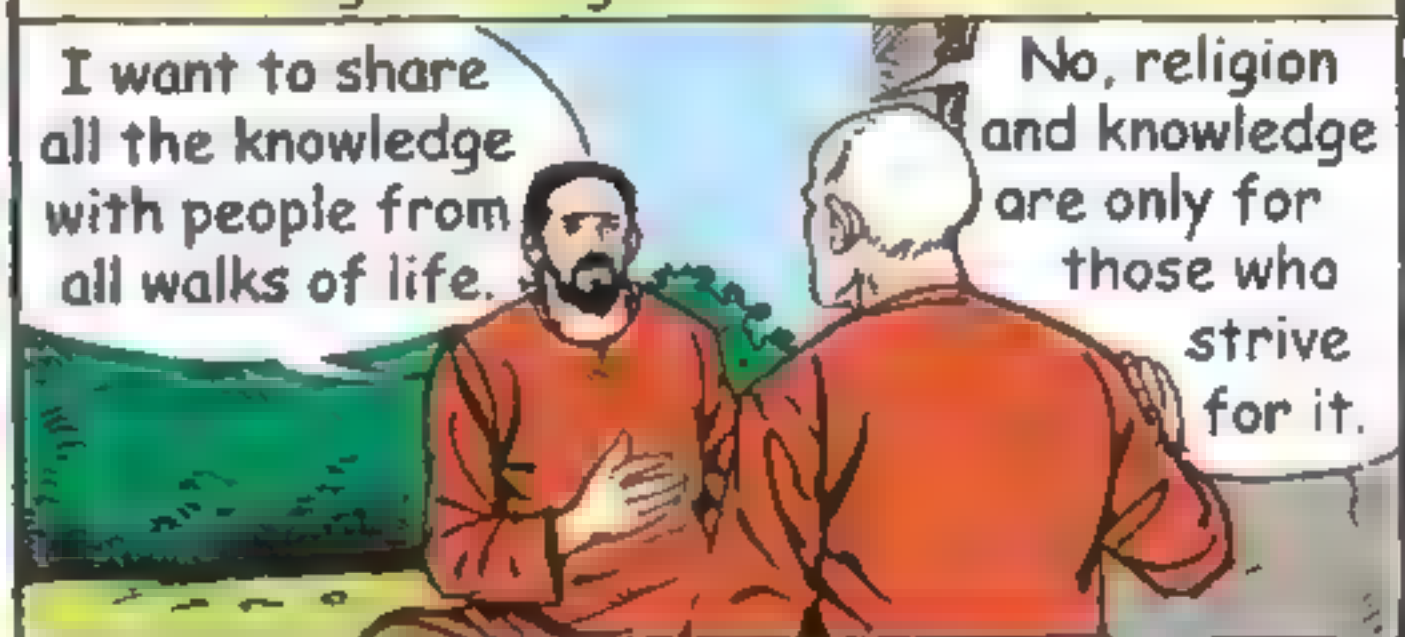
Is this what they are doing out as Hinduism? The real truth needs to be taken to the masses. Can I do it?



His love for his countrymen prompted him to ask his guru for guidance.

I want to share all the knowledge with people from all walks of life.

No, religion and knowledge are only for those who strive for it.



It was river Ganga that inspired him.

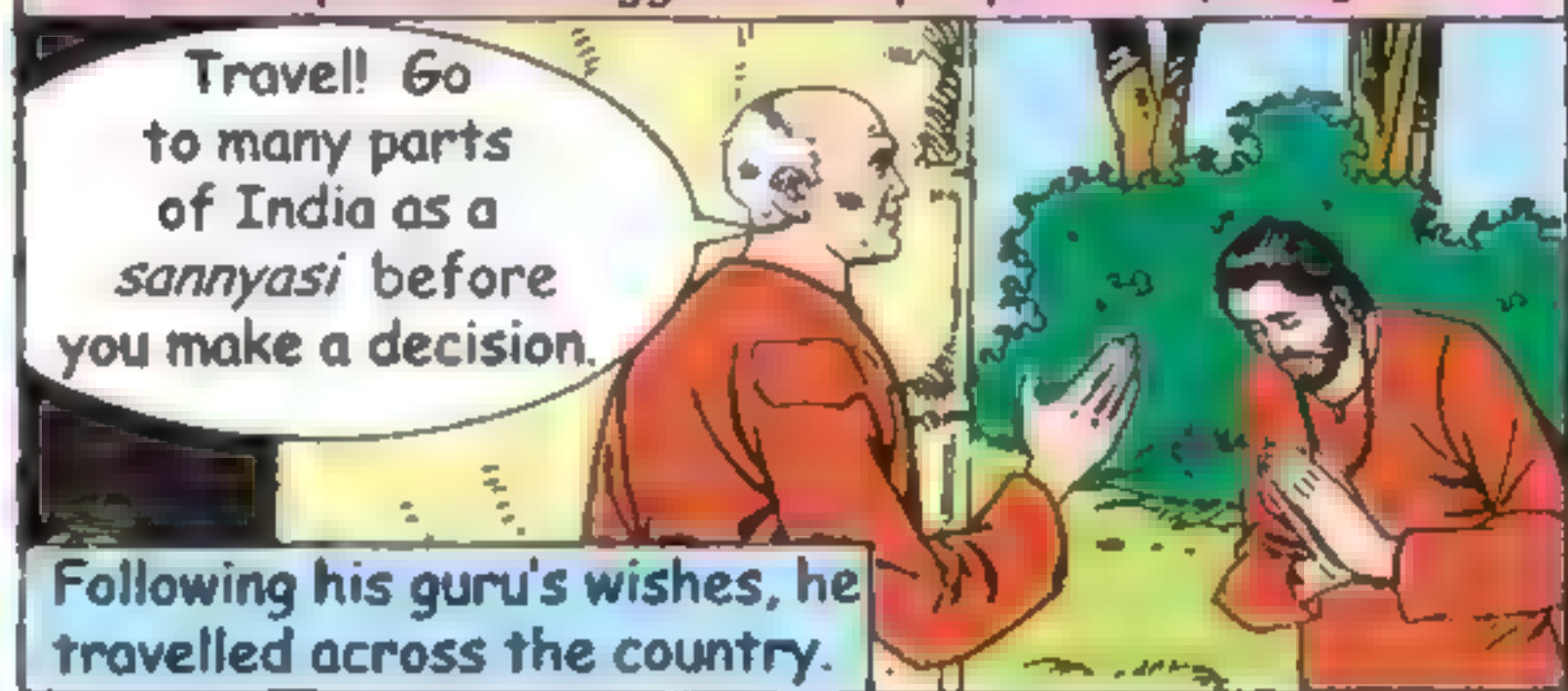
It seems to say, "Like me, rush down to the plains, taking life and nourishment to all."



Swami Tapovanam suggested a preparatory stage.

Travel! Go to many parts of India as a *sannyasi* before you make a decision.

Following his guru's wishes, he travelled across the country.





He faced hunger, hardship and mockery during his seven months' travel.

People all over the country are ignorant of their rich spiritual legacy. I will reintroduce Hinduism to the Hindus.

In the year 1951, he decided to take the knowledge of the Vedas directly to the people

I will hold a series of lectures in the main towns and cities

Swamiji wanted the teachings to be accessible to all people, not only the priests.

But what language will you use? We have no common language.

With English I can reach across the length and breadth of the country.

Finally, he convinced his guru -

I will try to do what I can. I will conduct *Jnana Yajnas* all over the country.

It's a mammoth task. You have my blessings for this gigantic, glorious mission. Make sure you have at least four people in the audience.

After centuries of foreign rule, Indians were totally out of touch with their religion, philosophy and culture.

It's my dream to make Indians proud of their ancient and glorious culture.

National pride was conspicuous by its absence. Indians had begun to look down upon themselves.

With a trunk full of notes and books, he arrived in Pune with only 25 paise in his pocket. His first *Jnana Yajna* of 100 days was held in Pune from 23rd December, 1951, at the Ganesha Temple, and was organised by Susheela Mudaliar. His introduction to the *Yajna* was -

A Hindu swami to talk! A Hindu temple as the background. The subject "Let us be Hindus." Strange! It sounds like a paradox.

Only seven listeners sat around the young swami during the first few days.

Soon the word spread about his clarity of thought and dynamism of speech and wit.

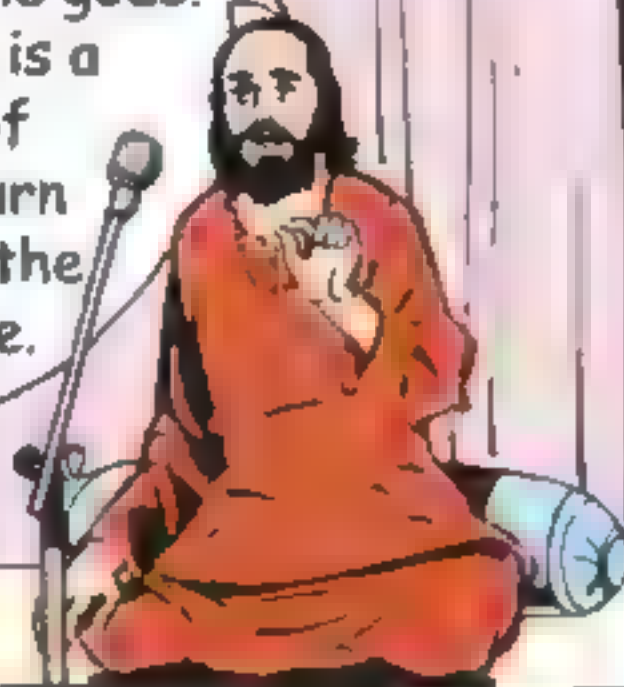
Through the instruments of BMI (body, mind, intellect, you, the *jiva*, the PFT (perceiver, feeler, thinker) contact the world of OET (objects, emotions, thoughts)

Vedic texts were shrouded in secrecy and Sanskrit. Swami Chinmayananda explained them in English, much to the anger of the priests who thought they should be taught only to a select few and only in Sanskrit.



Interpreting the Vedic rituals for modern times, Swamiji called his talks *Jnana Yajnas*.

In the old days, *Yajnas*, or fire sacrifices, were held to honour the gods. Our *Jnana Yajna* is a different form of sacrifice. We burn our ignorance in the fire of knowledge.



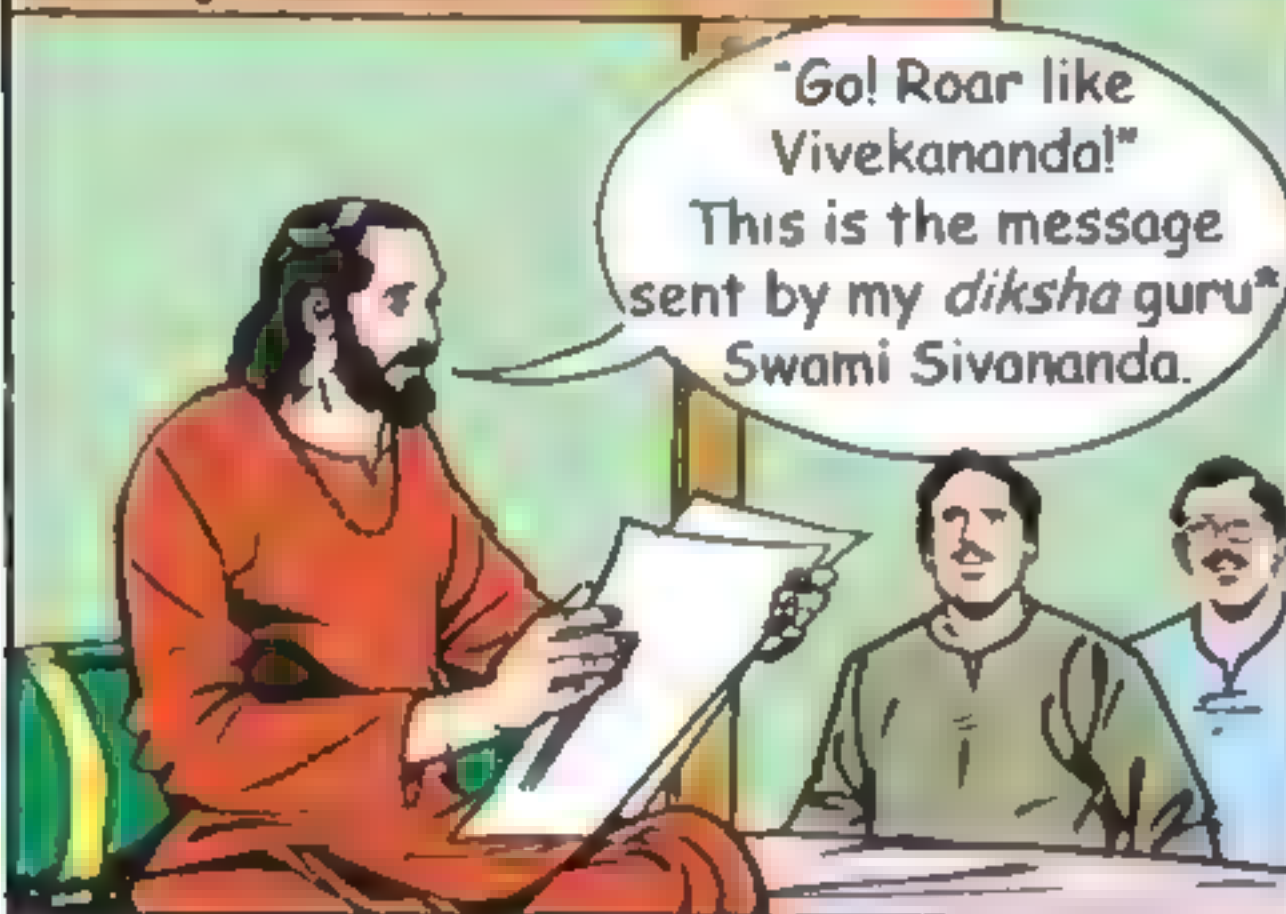
The Lord is the Eye of the eye and the Ear of the ear. He is the power because of which the eye can see, and the ear can hear.

I feel my whole life is changed.



Swamiji received a letter —

"Go! Roar like Vivekananda!"  
This is the message sent by my *diksha guru*\* Swami Sivananda.



Continuous chanting of the Lord's name was conducted in relay for 41 days by seekers. Meditation classes were started

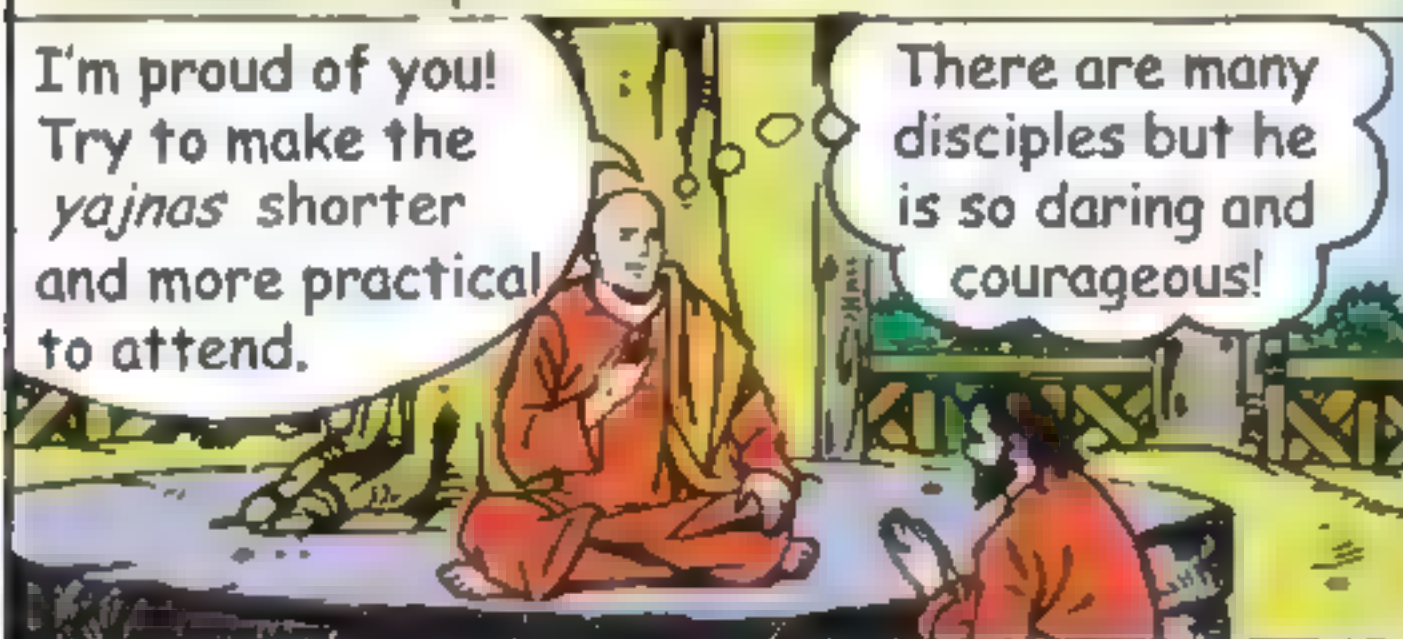


Faithful devotees took down his speeches and printed them in booklets for free distribution all around.

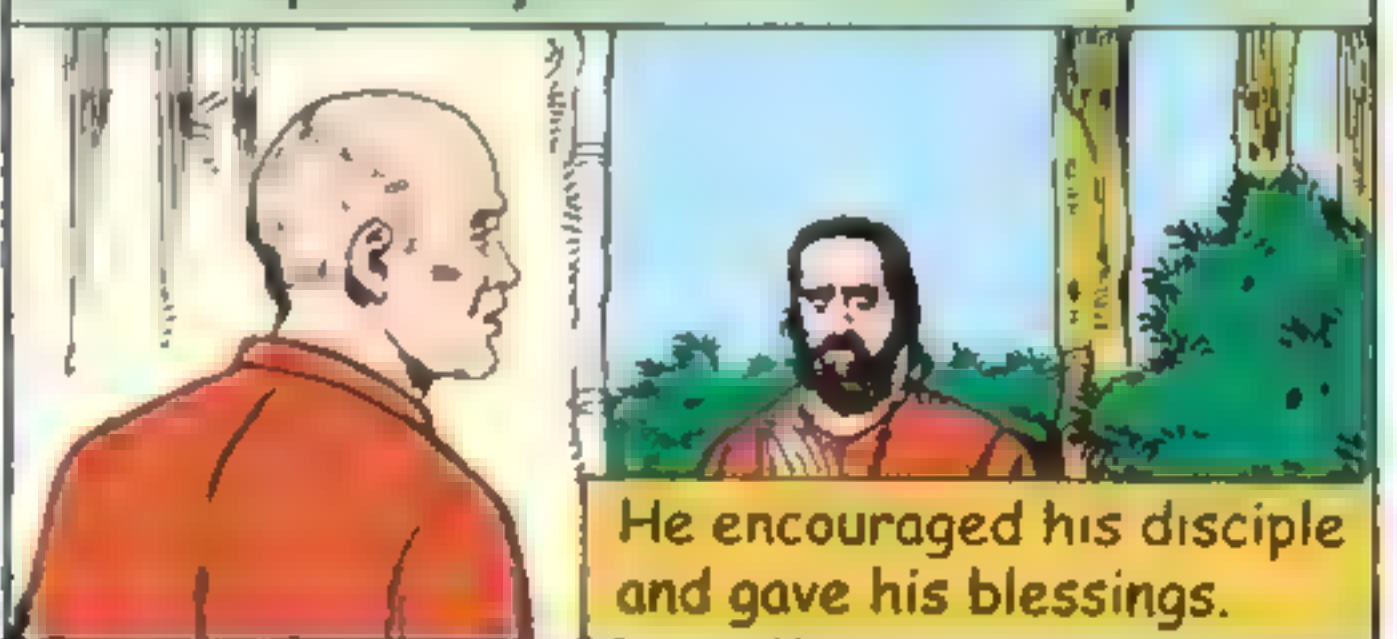
After the first *yajna*, he went back to Swami Sivananda to report about it.

I'm proud of you! Try to make the *yajnas* shorter and more practical to attend.

There are many disciples but he is so daring and courageous!



He then went to Uttarkashi to pay respects to Swami Tapovanam, who listened in silent pride.



He encouraged his disciple and gave his blessings.

He went to Kerala and met his father and then on to Madras, the most orthodox of cities.\*\*

The only place available for a discourse is a haunted house belonging to a Muslim.

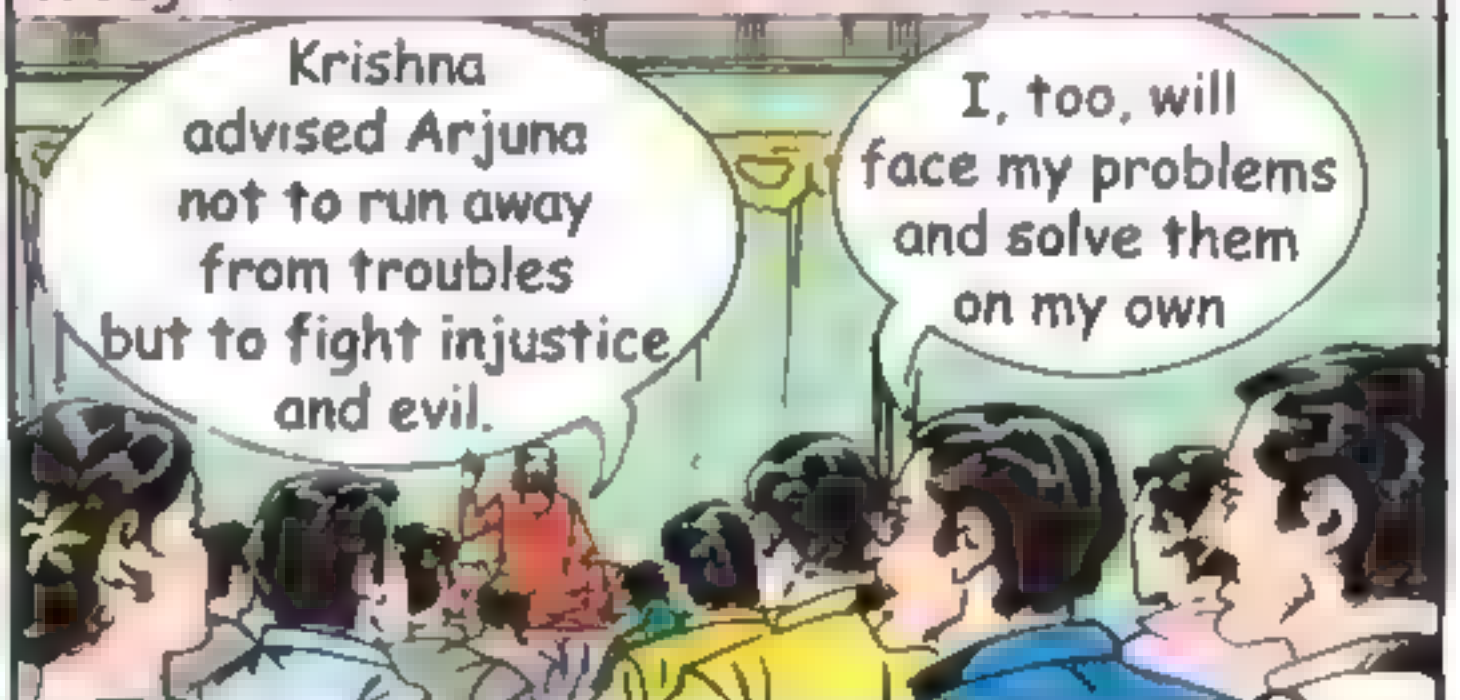
Don't worry! I'll catch the ghost!!



The talks were printed and distributed as *yajna prasad*. His teachings on the *Bhagavad Gita* brought it back to life and relevance.

Krishna advised Arjuna not to run away from troubles but to fight injustice and evil.

I, too, will face my problems and solve them on my own



\* Guru who confers *sanmyasa* \*\* The priests did not approve of the Shastras being explained in the English language. They relented when the Shankaracharya of Kanchi approved of it



Study groups were formed by devotees in towns across the country. They met regularly to discuss, learn and share the wisdom and knowledge of the scriptures.



In 1953, a group of devotees in Madras organised themselves as "Chinmaya Mission."

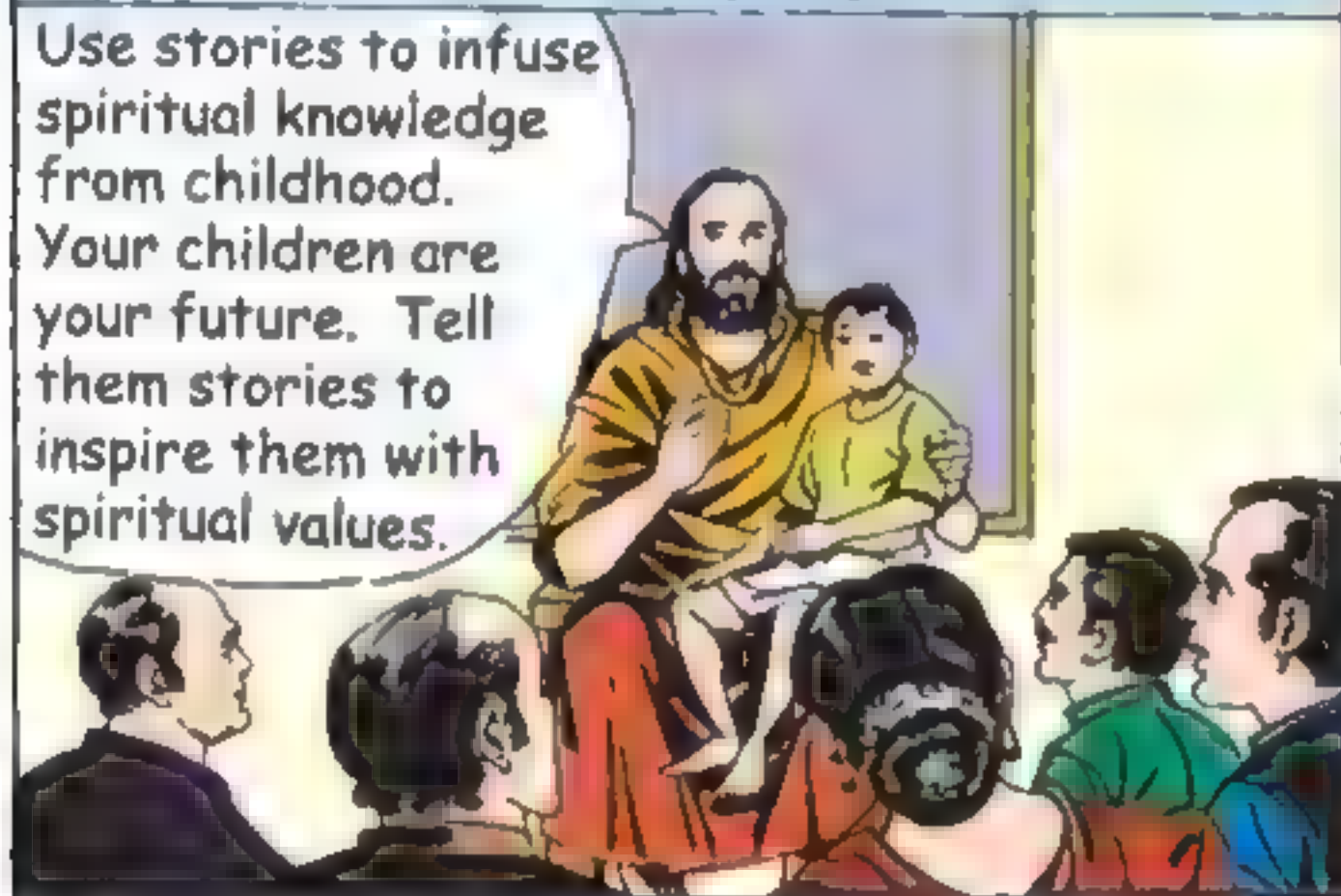
Do not name the Mission after me. I've not come here to be institutionalized.

But 'Chinmaya' means true knowledge. We are calling ourselves Chinmaya Mission as seekers of true knowledge.



When he met parents during *satsang*, he stressed the potential of young minds.

Use stories to infuse spiritual knowledge from childhood. Your children are your future. Tell them stories to inspire them with spiritual values.



Study groups formed Balavihar classes for children. Stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were told and simple *bhajans* sung.

Hari Om!

How lucky our children are! We had no Balavihars when we were young.



A number of stories for children told by Swamiji were published.

For the youth he held a series of talks including those on the Art of Man-making and many more.

The youth are not useless. They are only used less!



To discuss and study the values in the *Bhagavad Gita* youth groups called Yuva Kendras were formed.

Realizing the importance of value-based education in early life, Swamiji encouraged the growth of Chinmaya Vidyalayas.\*

Children are lamps to be lit not vessels to be filled. This is where real nation-building work begins



Swamiji loved children's questions and answered each one at their level of understanding.

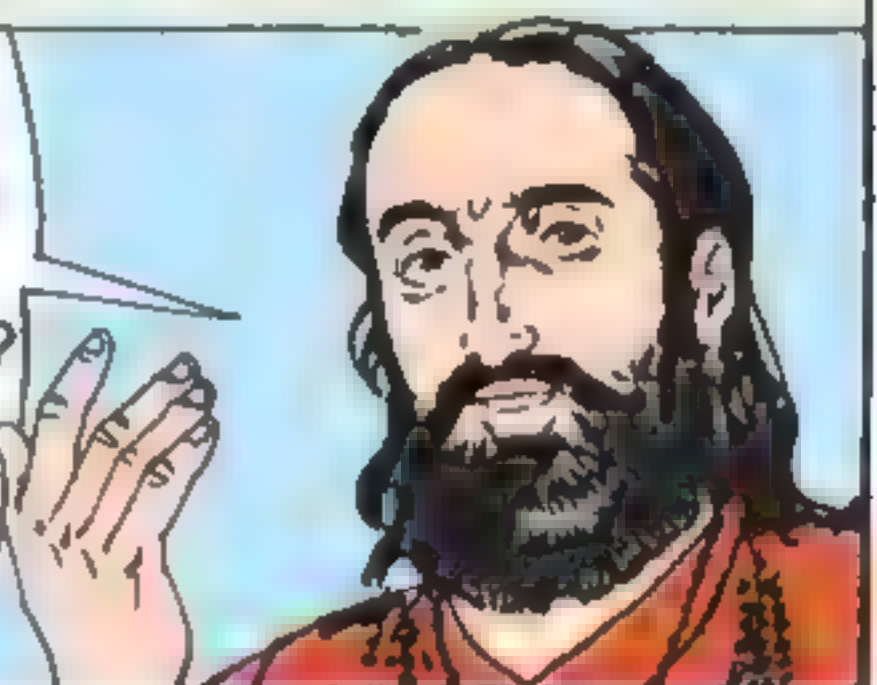
Swamiji, what is God?

God is the one who enables a black cow that eats green grass to give white milk



He gave children role models to look up to.

Buddha, Christ, Rama, Krishna, the Rishis and Acharyas do you know what they had in common? They were artists in transforming life on earth with their love.





He wrote a collection of letters addressed to *Bala Vihars* and even found time to answer the questions sent by children.

Smile at life and life smiles.  
As you give to life, so shall  
life give unto you.



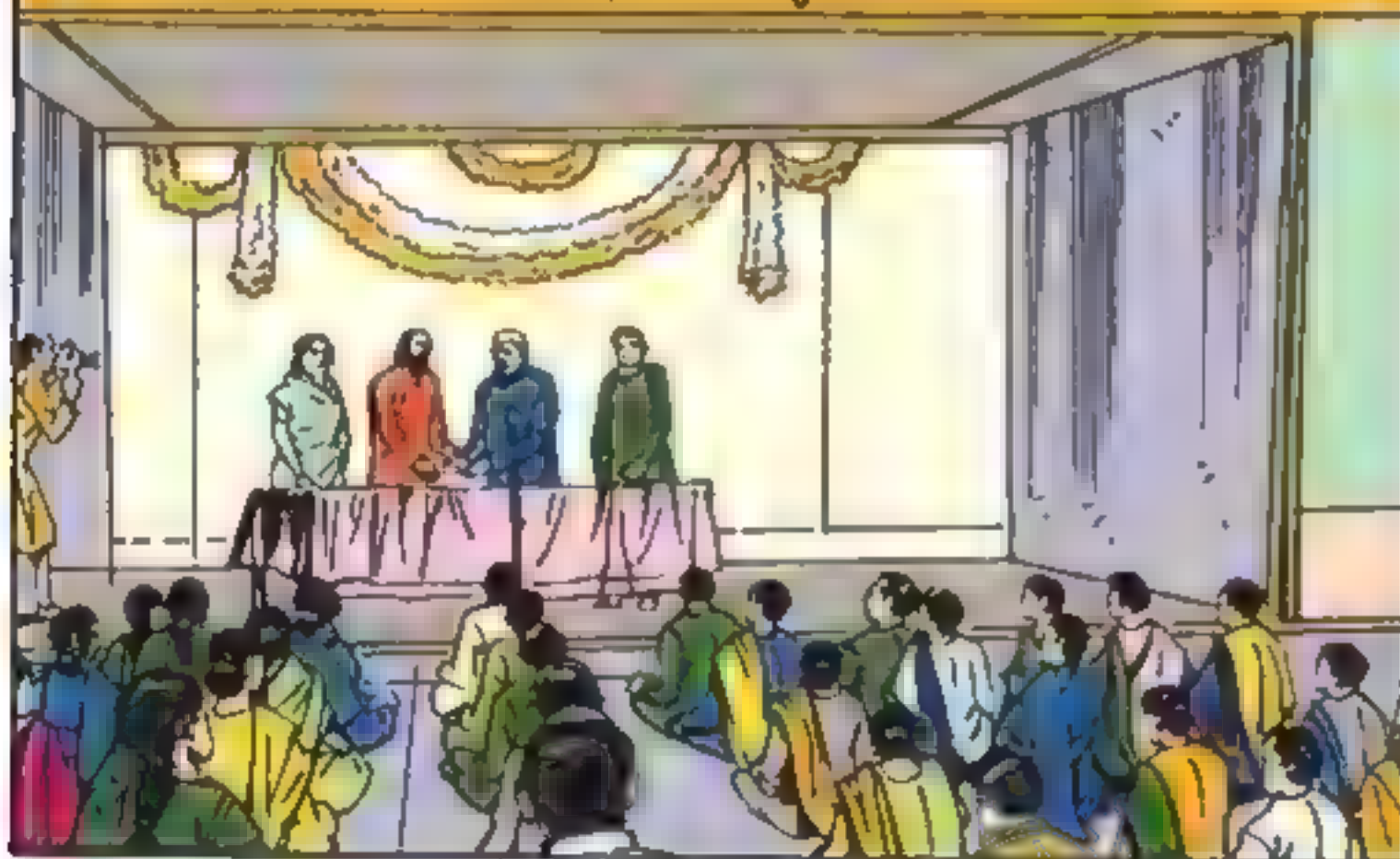
He explained the symbolism before each ritual worship.

Pick up a petal.  
Bring it to your heart.  
Chant the name of  
the Lord while offering  
the flower to any picture  
or symbol of the Lord.  
With each name of  
the Lord, you give up a  
wrong or sad thought.



Swamiji was particular that people sat in perfect rows.

The 1955 yajna held in Delhi was inaugurated by the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

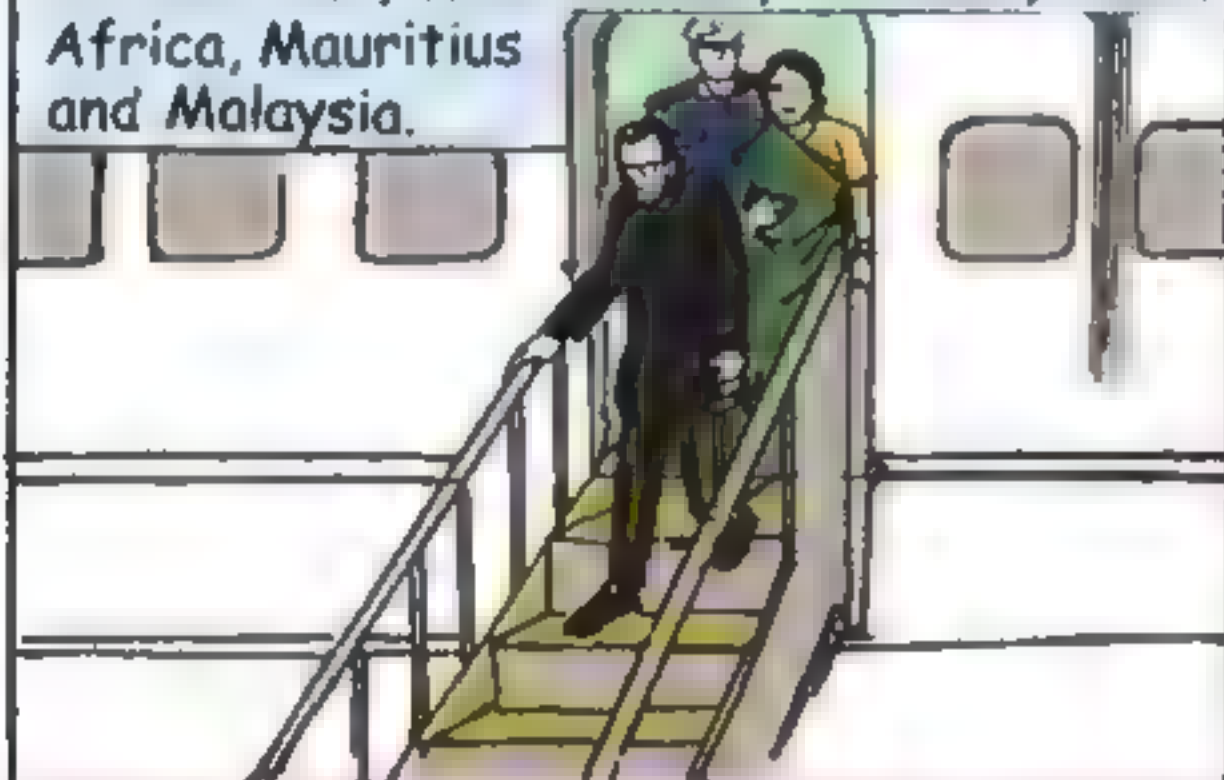


To train teachers to spread Vedanta, Swamiji envisioned a *gurukula*\* style institute. He named the school Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, after Lord Krishna's guru, Sandeepany.



In 1964, the Jagadeeshwara temple was built at the Sandeepany site and classes began.

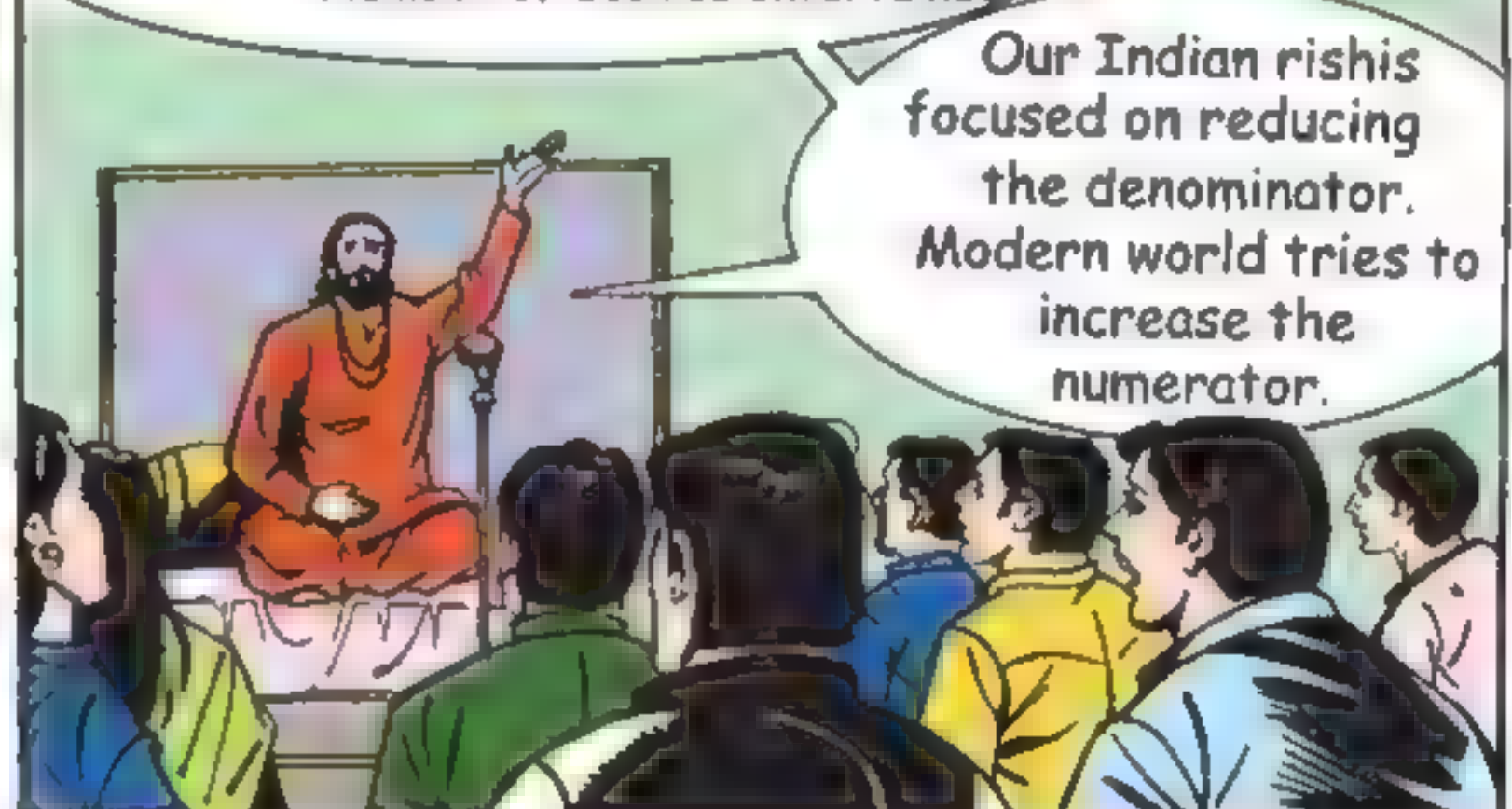
In March, 1965, he set out for a global tour of 12 countries, including USA, Switzerland, West Indies, Thailand, South Africa, Mauritius and Malaysia.



People of all faiths thronged to hear him—not just Hindus. Many lectures were held in churches.

His foreign tours were so successful that over the years, he was invited to speak at academic institutions such as MIT, Stanford and Harvard.

Happiness =  $\frac{\text{Number of desires fulfilled}}{\text{Number of desires entertained}}$

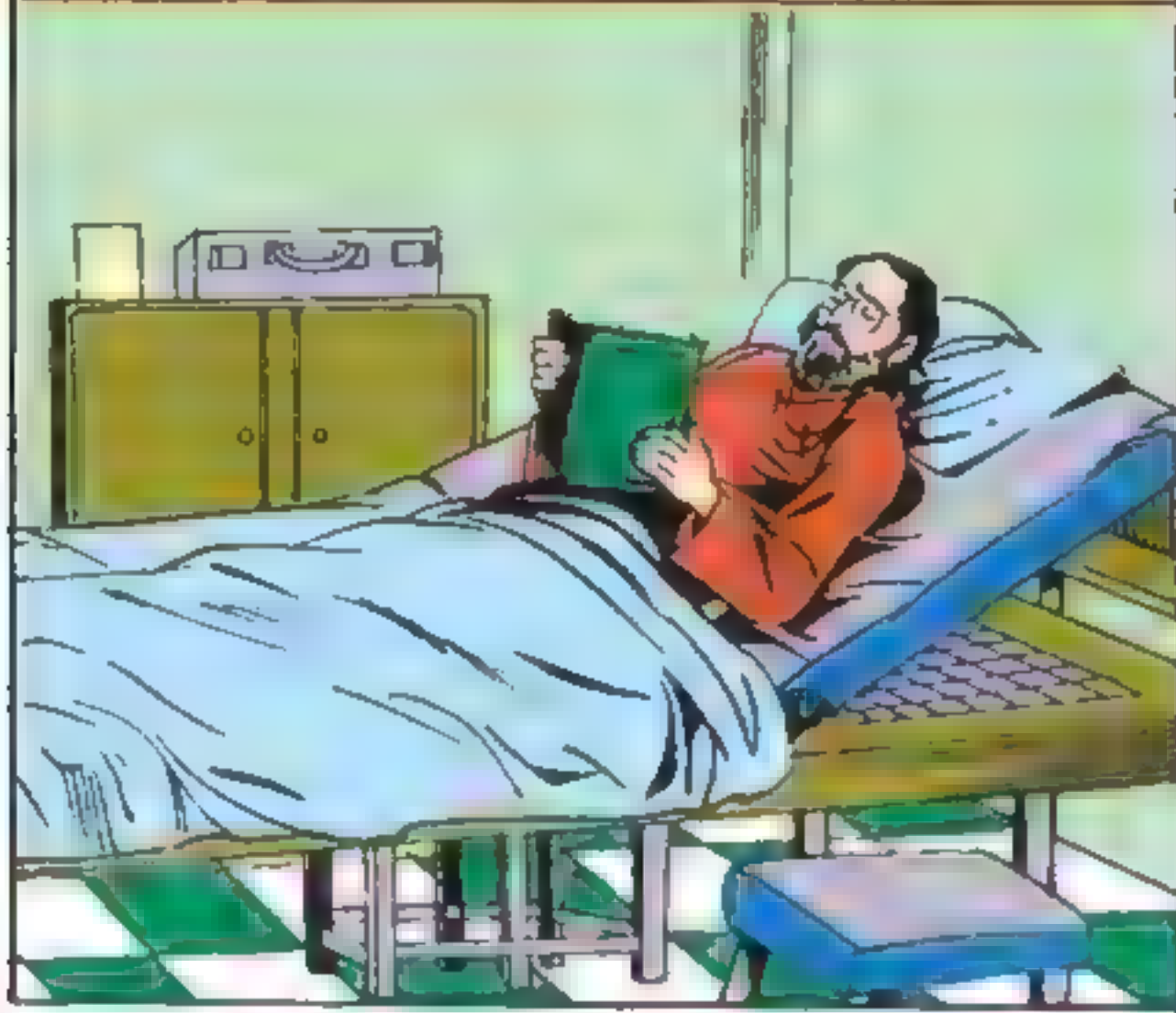


Our Indian rishis  
focused on reducing  
the denominator.  
Modern world tries to  
increase the  
numerator.

\* Vedic style university with students living at the teacher's abode.



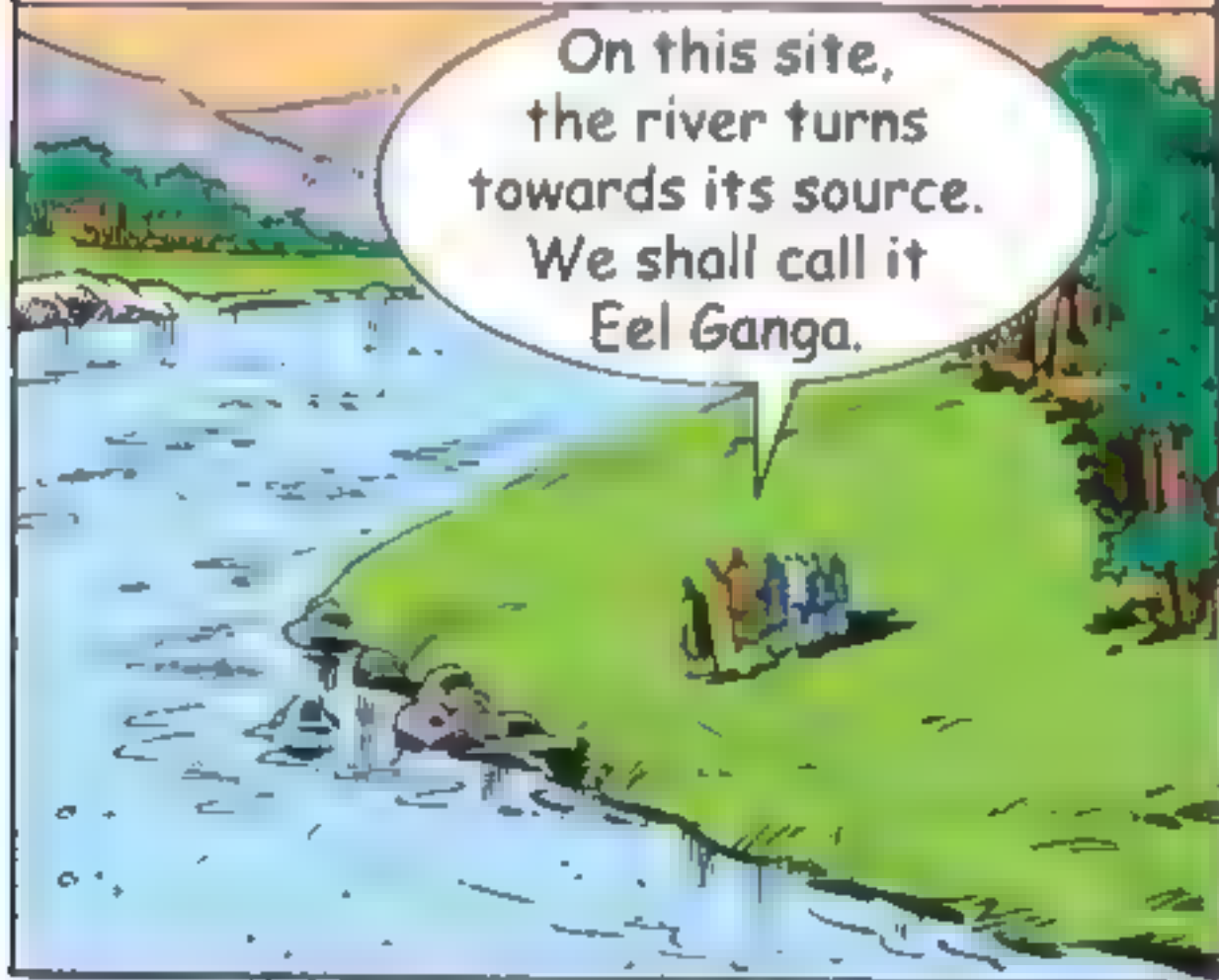
His heart was large and arms long enough to embrace the whole world. But his health was failing. He had his first heart attack in 1970 but did not reduce his workload



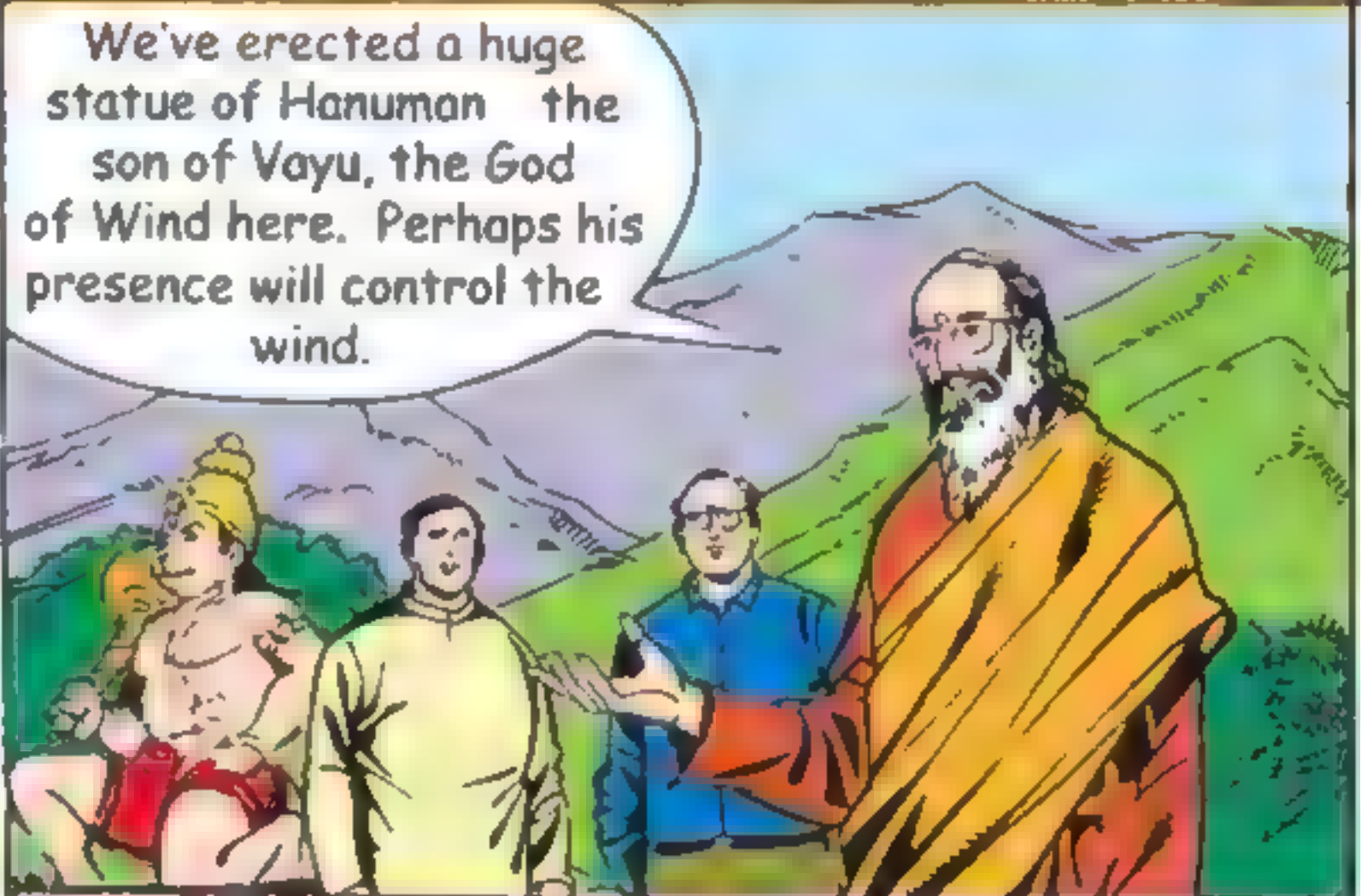
In 1975, the activities of Swamiji's disciples in the West were formally organised in the U.S.A. under Chinmaya Mission West.



In 1978, Chinmaya Mission West purchased property in Northern California, on the banks of the Eel River. Here citizens from USA and Canada were trained to become teachers of Vedanta.

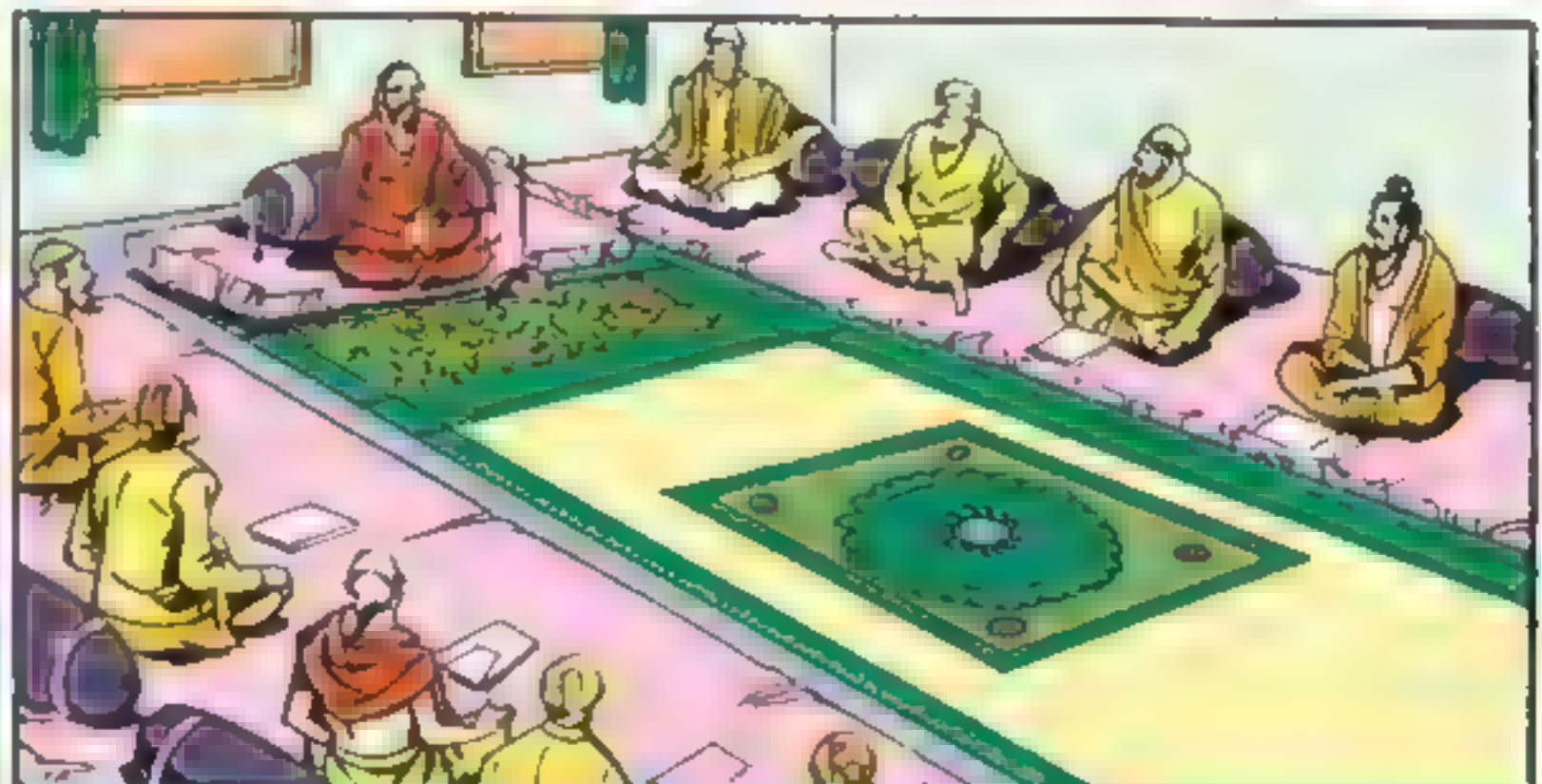


Constructing the ashram at the windy Sidhabari \* site was difficult.



The wind subsided and the ashram flourished. Here, Vedanta teachers' training is conducted in Hindi.

He established several temples and his advice was sought by other organisations on their temple plans.



On several occasions, Swami Chinmayananda brought together religious leaders from different faiths and from different sections of Hinduism.

\* in Himachal Pradesh



As the years rolled by, Swamiji's devotees multiplied. Each devotee was charmed by his wit and logic in making the knowledge of the Vedas so easy to understand in a modern language—simple and persuasive.

Recognise your real enemies, desire and anger.

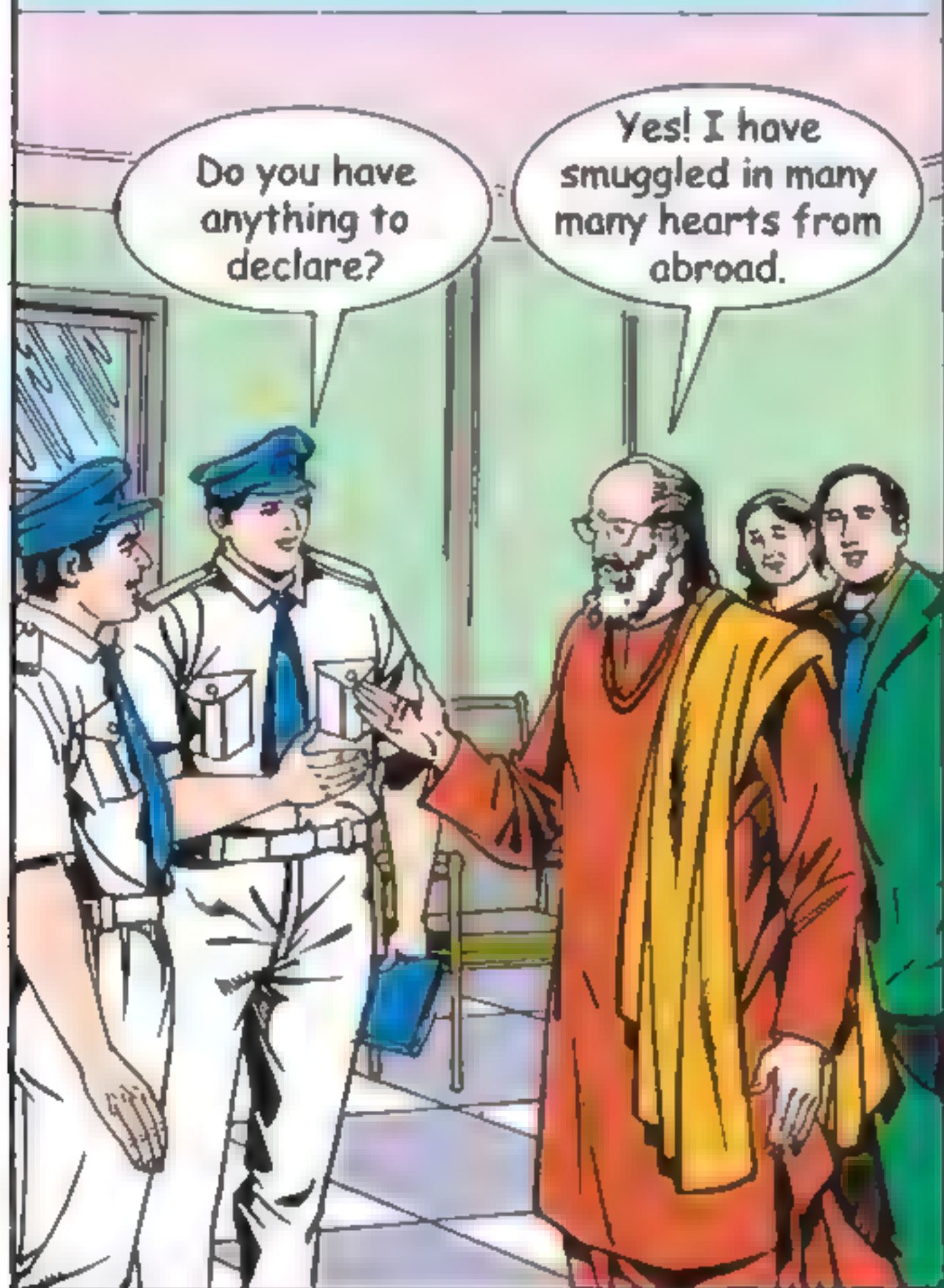
I feel he is reading my mind and speaking only to me!



He had mastered the scriptures, was an exceptional orator and also had a unique sense of humour. Once at an airport —

Do you have anything to declare?

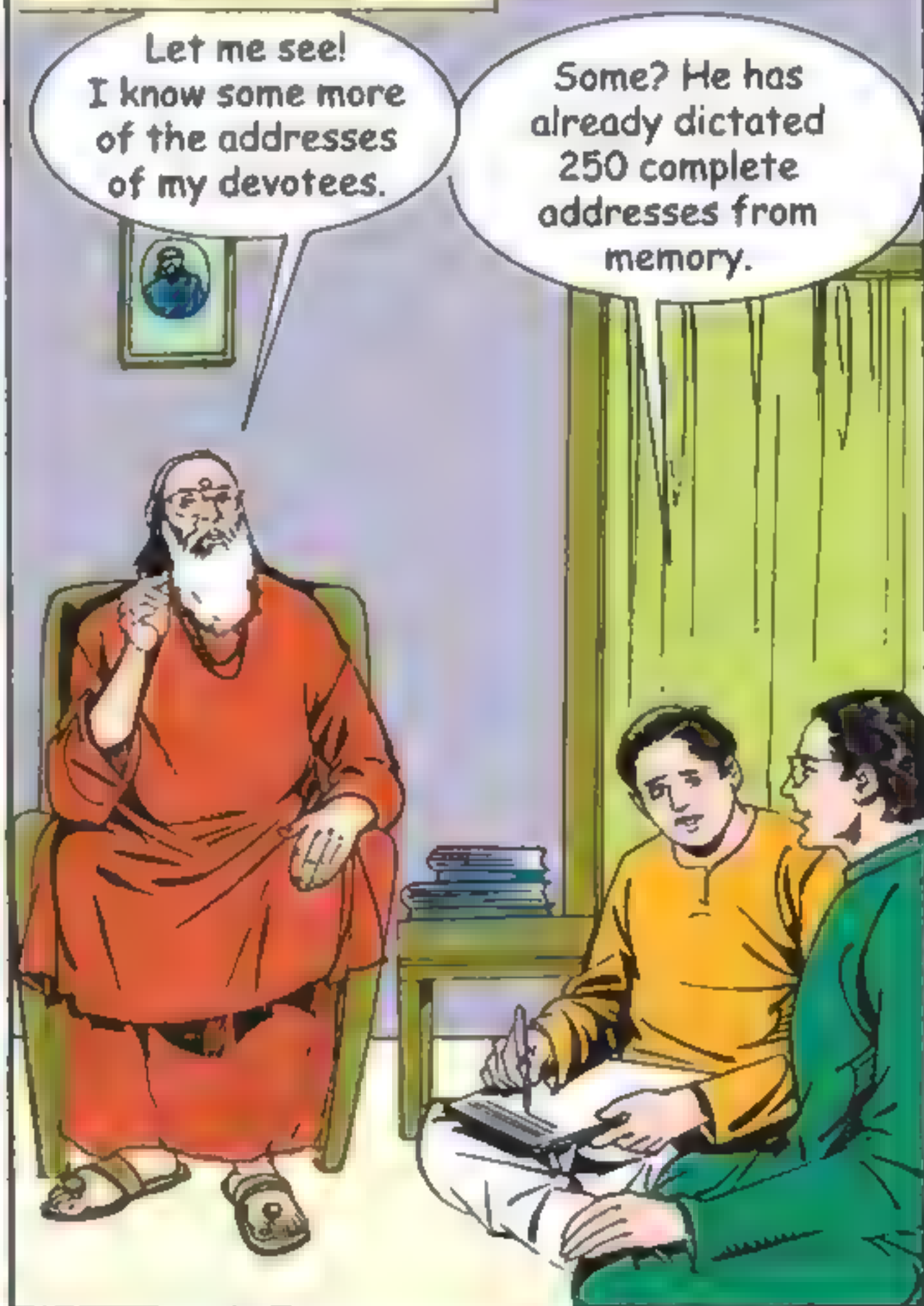
Yes! I have smuggled in many many hearts from abroad.



He had a phenomenal memory. Once when his address book was lost —

Let me see! I know some more of the addresses of my devotees.

Some? He has already dictated 250 complete addresses from memory.





He was extremely punctual and was always on time for his lectures.

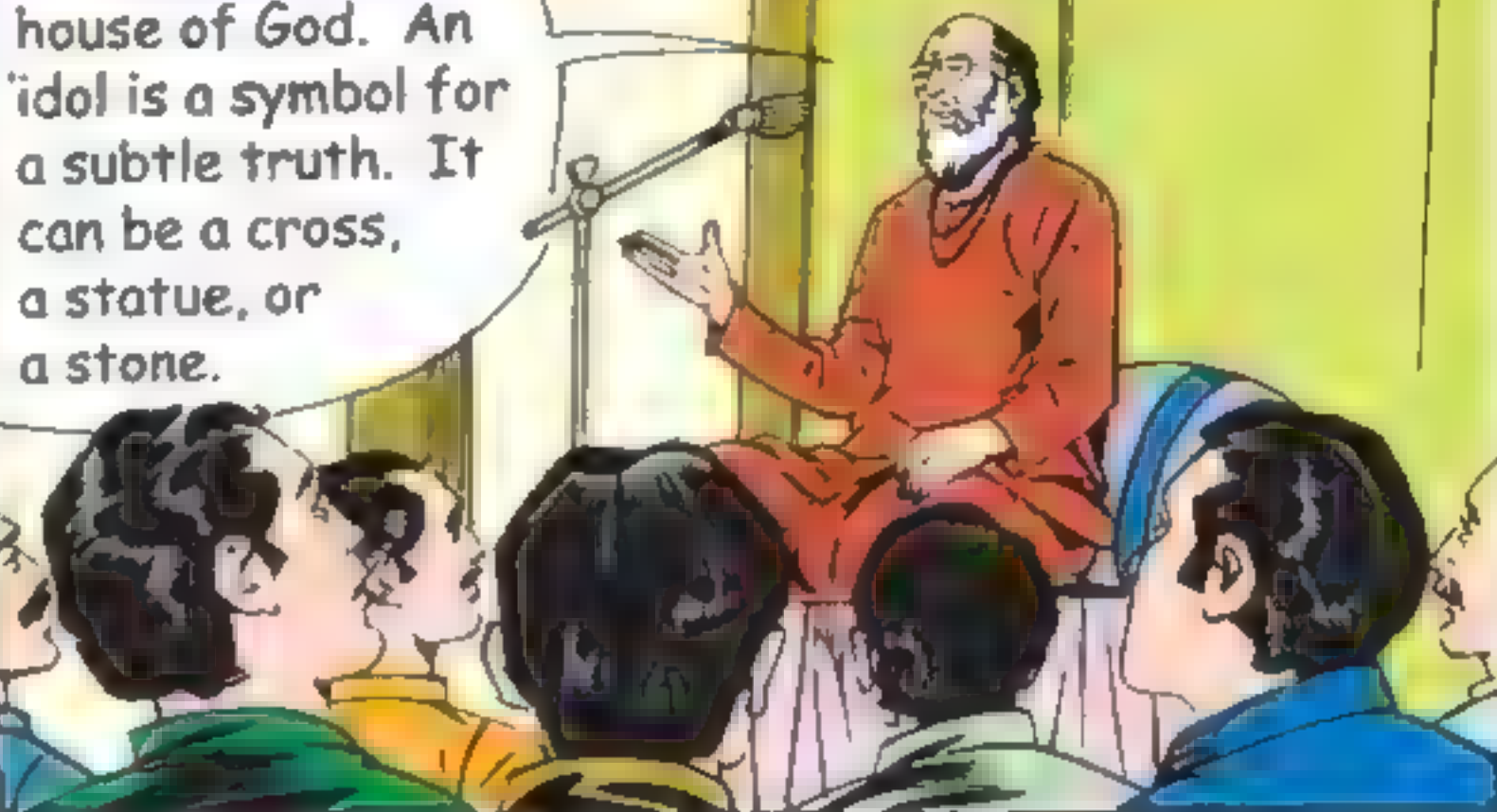
It's 6:29 p.m.  
His *yajna* is to start at 6:30 p.m.!

You can set your watch by Swamiji's arrival.



Once, while arriving for the lecture, Swamiji was completely drenched in pouring rain. He walked straight to the platform, dripping wet, and began his talk exactly on time.

All religions have a house of God. An idol is a symbol for a subtle truth. It can be a cross, a statue, or a stone.



In 1980, while on a lecture tour in U.S.A., Swamiji suffered another heart attack. He underwent bypass surgery in Houston, Texas.

He's recovering from a bypass. Yet his room light is on at 3 in the night! Where does he get his energy from?



He was advised to slow down and rest. But he continued his work at the earlier pace.

He travelled constantly to meet his devotees.

Swamiji, where do you live?

Mostly at airports and stations!

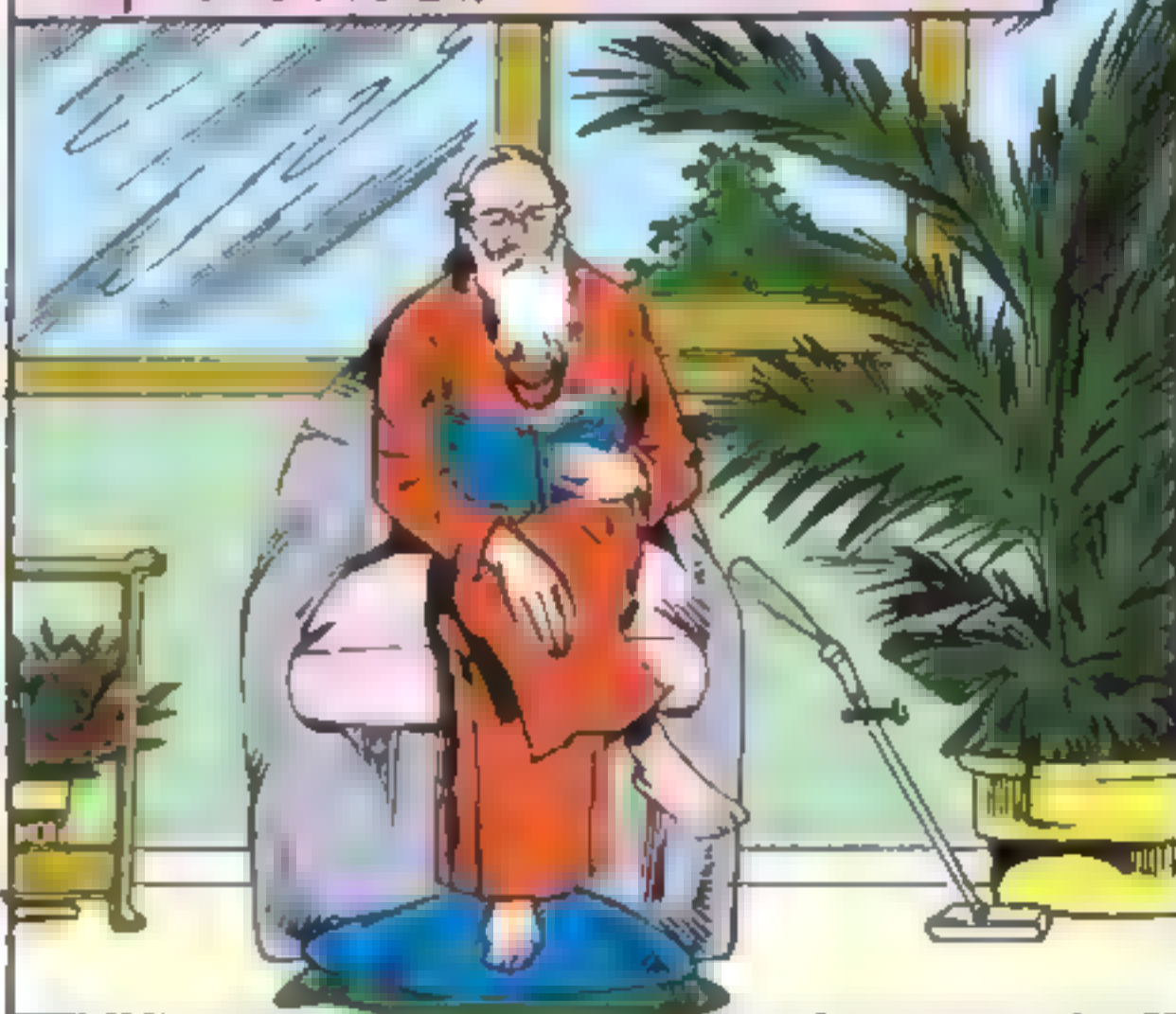


In 1989, the Chinmaya International Foundation was set up in Veliyanad, Kerala, in the ancestral maternal home of the spiritual missionary, Adi Shankaracharya.

This research institution will provide a bridge between thinkers of the East and West.



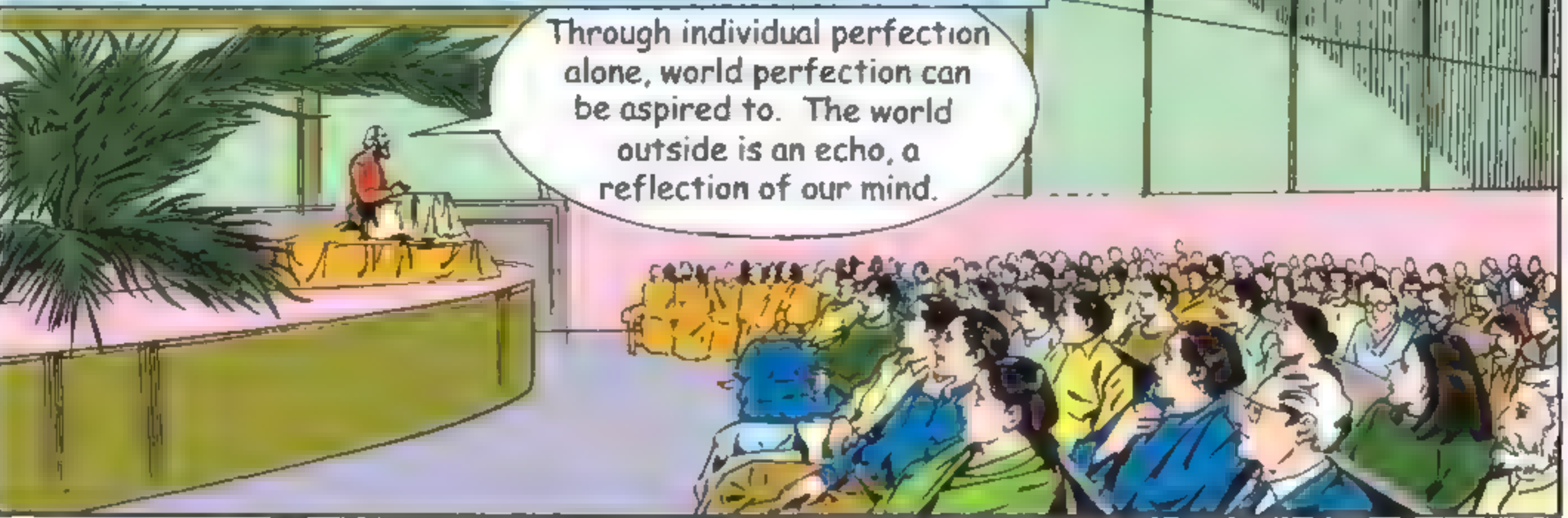
His lectures on the entire *Bhagavad Gita* were professionally recorded in 1991 in California at Krishnalaya, and continue to be a source of inspiration to all.





In November 1992, Swamiji visited 12 renowned universities in the USA and gave a talk at the United Nations in New York.

Through individual perfection alone, world perfection can be aspired to. The world outside is an echo, a reflection of our mind.



Swamiji was approachable anywhere by anyone, always ready to answer a doubt, even while accepting the many awards that came his way

Can birth determine an outcast or a high-caste man?

No, he becomes high or low according to his deeds.



Indians abroad wanted a school where their children could imbibe the culture and values of India. Swamiji initiated the plans for a Chinmaya International Residential School with international academic standards, value-based education and Indian culture.



The school was completed in 1996 in Coimbatore, India.

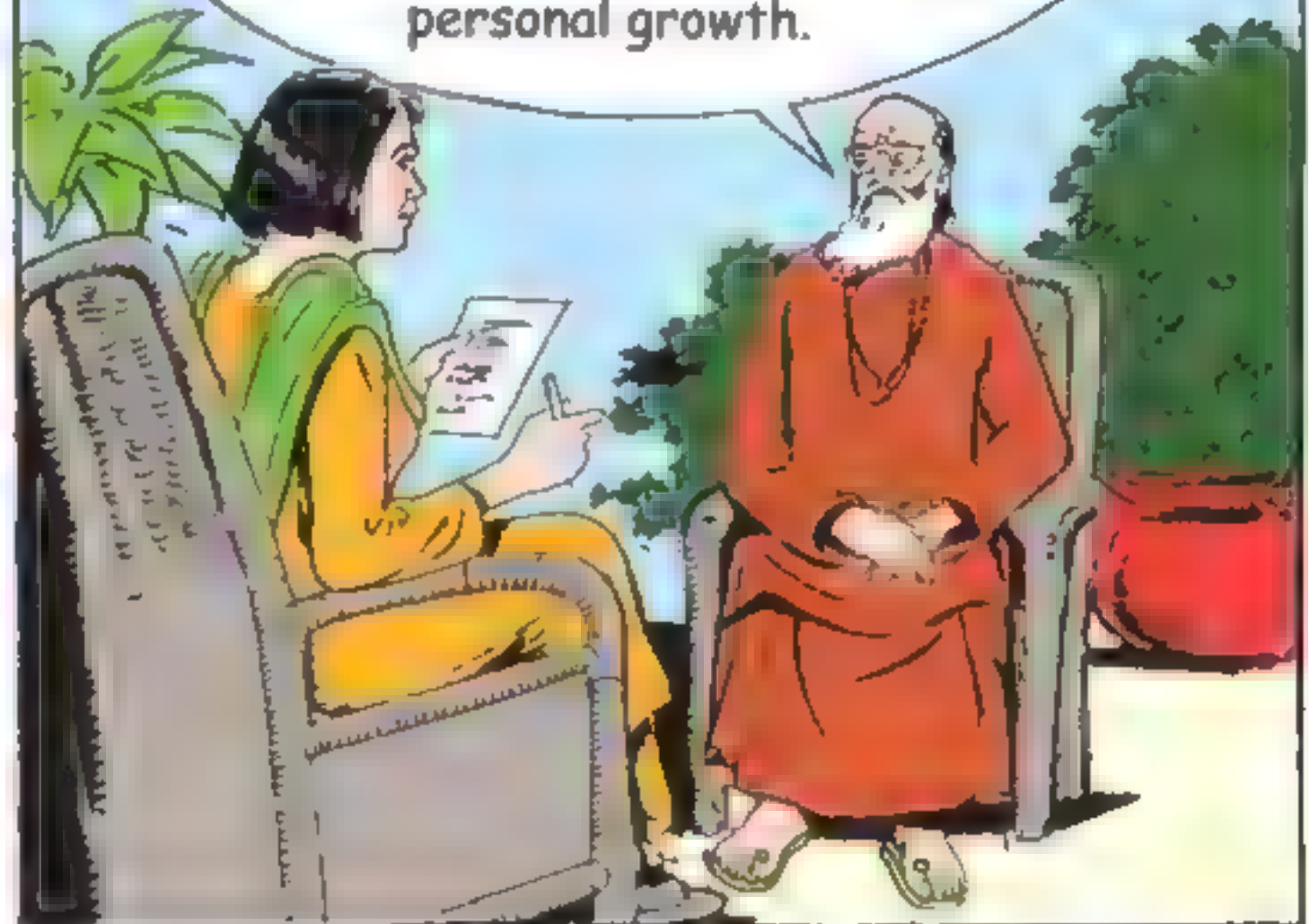
On July 9, 1993, at a Chinmaya Mission West Board meeting in New Jersey, Swamiji asked Swami Tejomayananda to get up off the floor and sit beside him —

Now there should be no doubt as to who will carry on with my work after me.



He had a vision for the future.

The family must be the unit, and a community is the home. We must rebuild a future where the younger generation has a better sense of compassion, of love, of concern, of involvement in social welfare, and not only one's personal profit or personal growth.





With words as his tools, Swamiji worked for 42 years to rebuild India, heart by heart, soul by soul and carry the ancient teachings of the Vedas to humanity at large throughout the world.

Man minus  
ego equals God. Rise  
above your ego  
and realize that  
"That thou art -"  
*Tat Tvam Asi.*

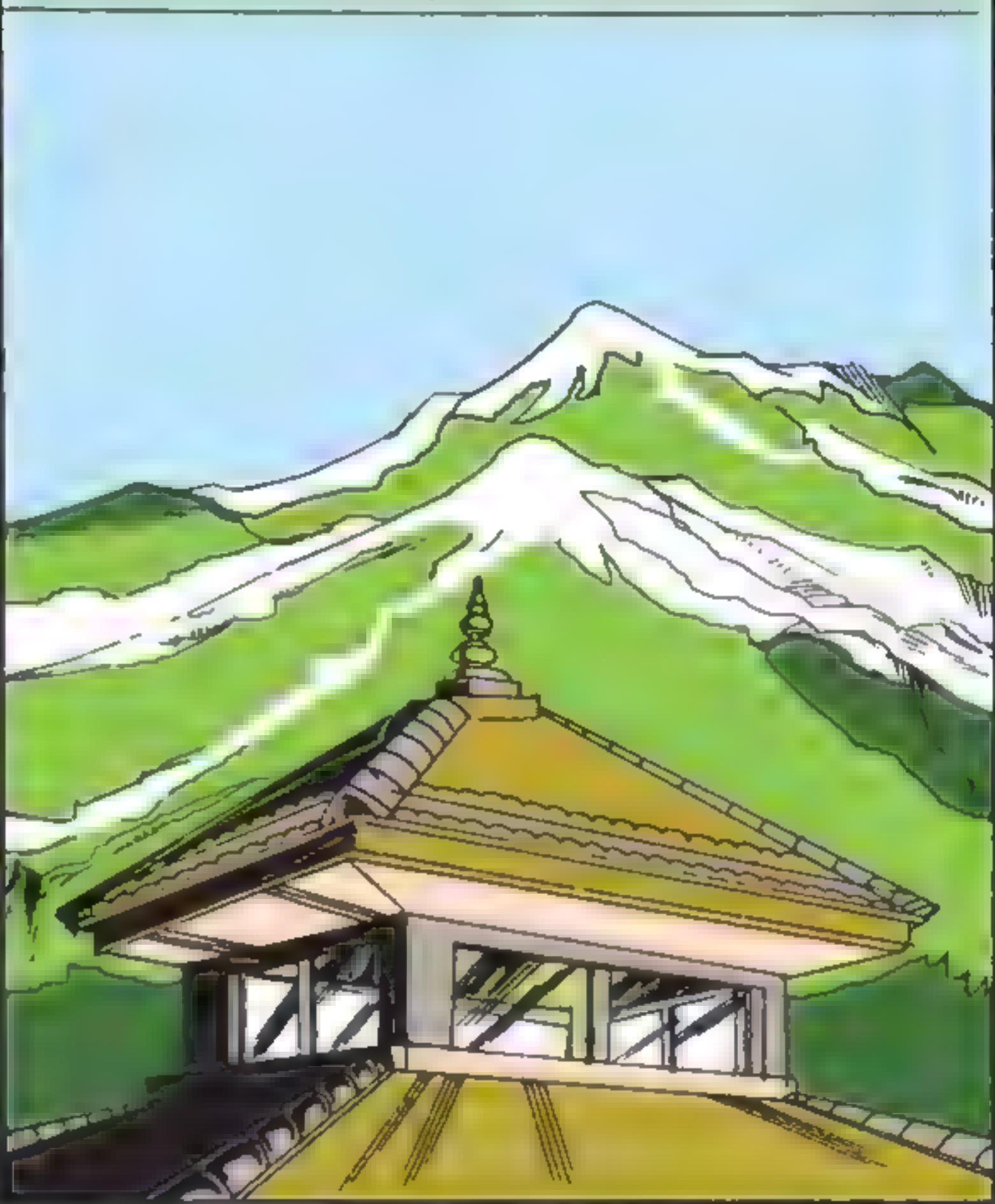


By the end of his life, Swamiji had held 576 *jnana yajnas* in India and hundreds more abroad.

At 5:45 p.m. on August 3, 1993 at San Diego, California, USA, Swamiji left his mortal frame and attained *Mahasamadhi*.



His mortal remains were carried to Sidhabari. His *samadhi* overlooks the spectacular mountains he loved.

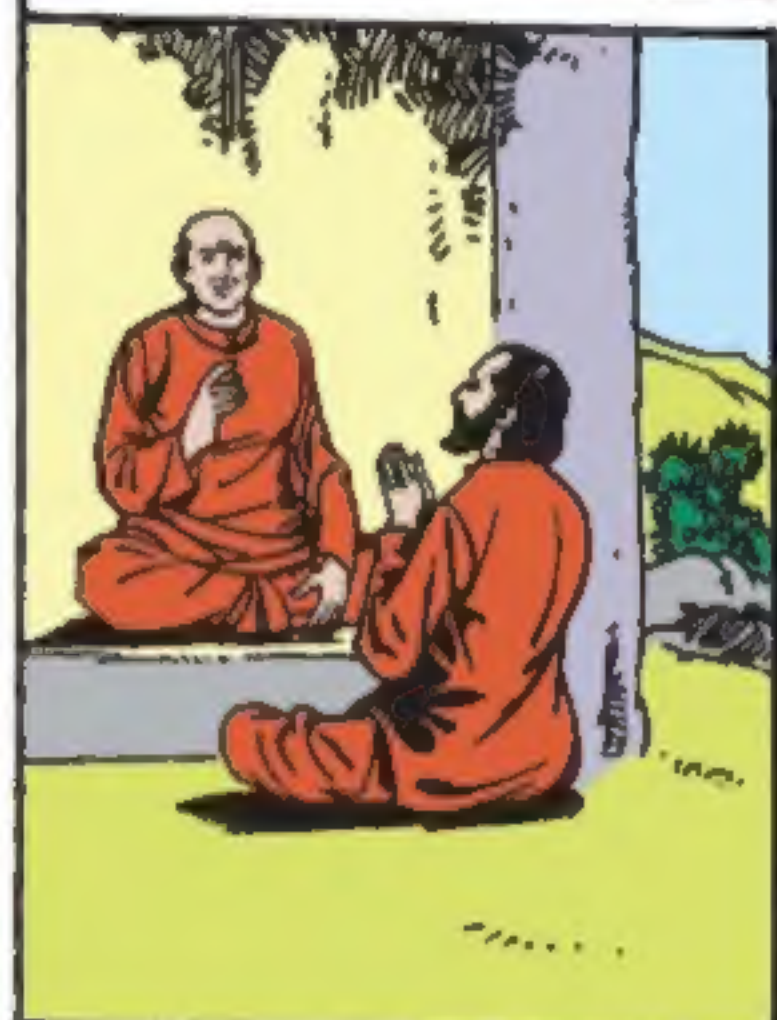




He had made a promise to his devotees -



The further I go,  
the nearer I shall  
be to each one  
of you!



A promise that he has kept — and continues to keep.



## **Chinmaya Mission Pledge**

**We stand as one family  
Bound to each other with love and respect**

**We serve as an army  
Courageous and disciplined  
Ever ready to fight against all low tendencies  
And false values, within and without us.**

**We live honestly  
The noble life of sacrifice and service  
Producing more than what we consume  
And giving more than what we take.**

**We seek the Lord's grace  
To keep us on the path of virtue, courage and wisdom.  
May Thy grace and blessings flow through us  
To the world around us.**

**We believe that the service of our country  
Is the service of the Lord of lords  
And devotion to the people  
Is the devotion to the Supreme Self.**

**We know our responsibilities  
Give us the ability and courage to fulfill them.**

***Om Tat Sat***



# WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

## EPICS AND MYTHOLOGY

*Best known stories from the Epics and the Puranas*

Abhimanyu  
Agastya  
Andhaka  
Aniruddha  
Aruni And Uttanka  
Ashwini Kumars  
Ayyappa  
Bahubali  
Bhanumati  
Bheema And Hanuman  
Bheeshma  
Chandrahasa  
Dasharatha  
Dhruva And Ashtavakra  
Draupadi  
Drona  
Elephanta  
Gandhari  
Ganesha  
Ganesha And The Moon  
Ganga  
Garuda  
Ghatotkacha  
Hanuman  
Hanuman To The Rescue  
Harischandra  
Heroes Of Hampi  
Indra And Shachi  
Indra And Shibi  
Indra And Vritra  
Jagannatha Of Puri  
Jayadratha  
Kacha And Devayani  
Karna  
Karttikeya  
Konark  
Krishna  
Krishna And Jarasandha  
Krishna And Narakasura  
Krishna And Rukmini  
Krishna And Shishupala  
Krishna And The False  
Vaasudeva  
Kubera  
Kumbhakarna  
Mahabharata  
Mahiravana  
Nachiketa  
Nahusha  
Nala Damayanti  
Pareekshit  
Parashurama  
Prabhavati  
Pradyumna  
Pralad  
Purushottam Dev And  
Padmavati  
Rama  
Ravana Humbled  
Saraswati  
Sati And Shiva  
Savitri  
Shiva Parvati  
Stories of Creation  
Subhadra  
Sudama  
Sukanya  
Surya  
Tales From The  
Upanishads  
Tales Of Arjuna  
Tales Of Balarama  
Tales Of Durga  
Tales Of Indra  
Tales Of Narada

Tales Of Shiva  
Tales Of Vishnu  
Tales Of Yudhishtira  
Tapati  
Thanjavur  
The Churning Of The  
Ocean  
The Gita  
The Golden Mongoose  
The King In  
A Parrot's Body  
The Lord Of Lanka  
The Pandava Princes  
The Pandavas In Hiding  
The Parijata Tree  
The Sons Of Rama  
The Syamantaka Gem  
Tirupati  
Tripura  
Uloopi  
Vaishno Devi  
Vali  
Vishwamitra  
Yayati

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Albert Einstein  
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Babasaheb Ambedkar  
Basaveshwara  
Buddha  
Chaitanya Mahaprabhu  
Chanakya  
Chokha Mela  
Dayananda  
Deshbandhu  
Chittaranjan Das  
Eknath  
Fa Hien  
Ghanshyamdas Birla  
Guru Arjan  
Guru Gobind Singh  
Guru Har Gobind  
Guru Nanak  
Guru Tegh Bahadur  
Hiuen Tsang  
J.R.D Tata  
Jagadis Chandra Bose  
Jamsetji Tata  
Jawaharlal Nehru  
Jayaprakash Narayan  
Jim Corbett  
Jnaneshwar  
Kabir  
Kalidasa  
Lal Bahadur Shastri  
Lokmanya Tilak  
M. S. Subbulakshmi  
Madhvacharya  
Mahavira  
Marie And Pierre Curie  
Megasthenes  
Mirabai  
Mother Teresa  
Narayan Guru  
Rabindranath Tagore  
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Salim Ali  
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Soordas  
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Malavika  
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Prince Jivaka  
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The Adventures Of  
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Veer Dhaval

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Andher Nagari  
Angulimala  
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Birbal The Genius  
Birbal The Just  
Birbal The Wise  
Birbal The Witty  
Birbal To The Rescue  
The Inimitable Birbal  
Chandralalal  
Dhola And Maru  
Friends And Foes  
Gopal And The Cowherd  
Gopal The Jester  
**HITOPADESHA TALES**  
Choice Of Friends  
How Friends Are Parted  
Hothal  
**JATAKA TALES**  
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Bird Stories  
Deer Stories  
Elephant Stories  
Jackal Stories  
Monkey Stories  
Nandi Vishala  
Stories Of Courage  
Stories Of Wisdom  
Tales Of Misers  
The Deadly Feast  
The Giant And  
The Dwarf  
The Hidden Treasure  
The Magic Chant

The Mouse Merchant  
True Friends  
Kanwal And Kehar  
Kesari The Flying Thief  
King Kusha  
Manduka

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The Elephant  
The Brahmin And  
The Goat  
The Dullard  
The Greedy Mother-  
in-law  
The Jackal And  
The Wardrum  
Raman Of Tanali  
Raman The Matchless Wit  
Sahasramalla  
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Satwant Kaur  
Sharan Kaur  
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Tales Of Maryada Rama  
The Acrobat  
The Adventures  
Of Agad Datta  
The Adventures Of  
Baddu And Chholu  
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The Golden Sand  
The Green Demon  
The Unhappy Tiger  
The Learned Pandit  
The Lost Prince  
The Magic Grove  
The Miraculous Conch  
The Mystery Of  
The Missing Gift  
The Pandit And The  
Milkmaid  
The Pig And The Dog  
The Pious Cat  
The Priceless Gem  
The Prince And  
The Magician  
The Prophecy  
The Queen's Necklace  
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Yashodharma  
Balban  
Banda Bahadur  
Bappa Rawal  
Beni Madho And Pir Ali  
Bhagat Singh  
Bidhi Chand  
Bimbisara  
Chand Bibi  
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Durgadas  
Ellora Caves  
Hakka And Bukka  
Hari Singh Nalwa  
Harsha  
Hemu  
Humayun  
Jahangir  
Jallianwala Bagh  
Kalpana Chawla  
Kochunni  
Krishnadeva Raya  
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Lalitaditya  
Mangal Pande  
Noor Jahan  
Padmini  
Panna And Hadi Rani  
Paurava And Alexander  
Prithviraj Chauhan  
Raja Bhoja  
Raja Raja Chola  
Rana Kumbha  
Rana Pratap  
Rana Sanga  
Rani Abbakka  
Rani Durgavati  
Rani Of Jhansi  
Ranjit Singh  
Rash Bihari Bose  
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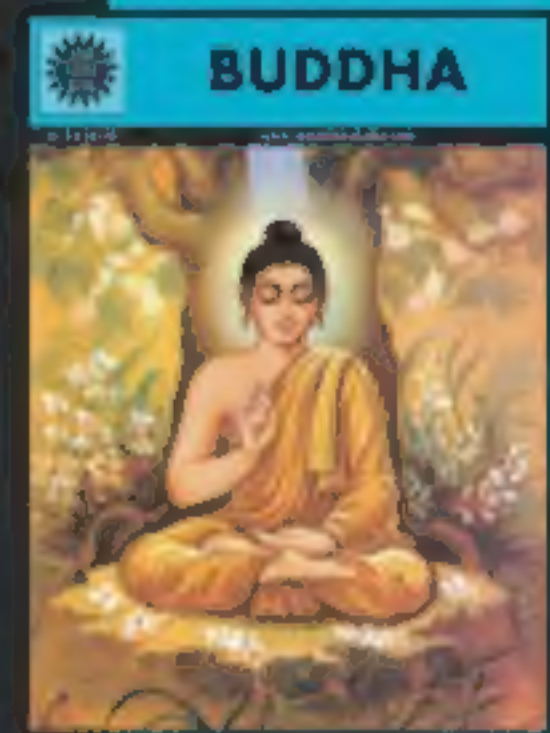
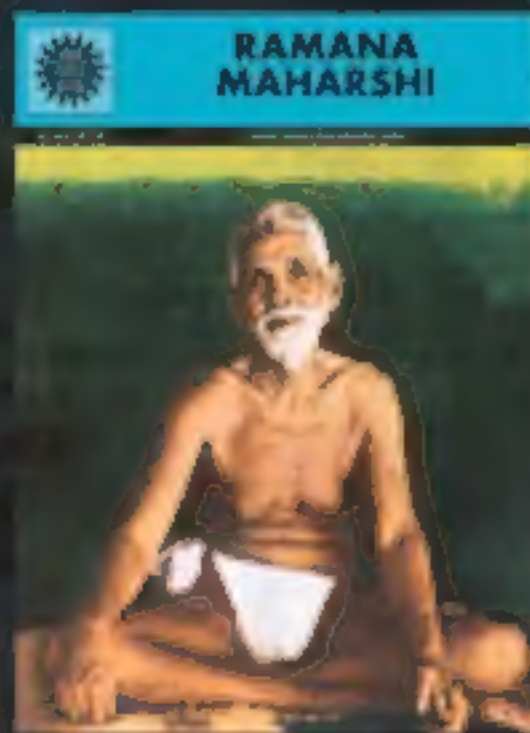
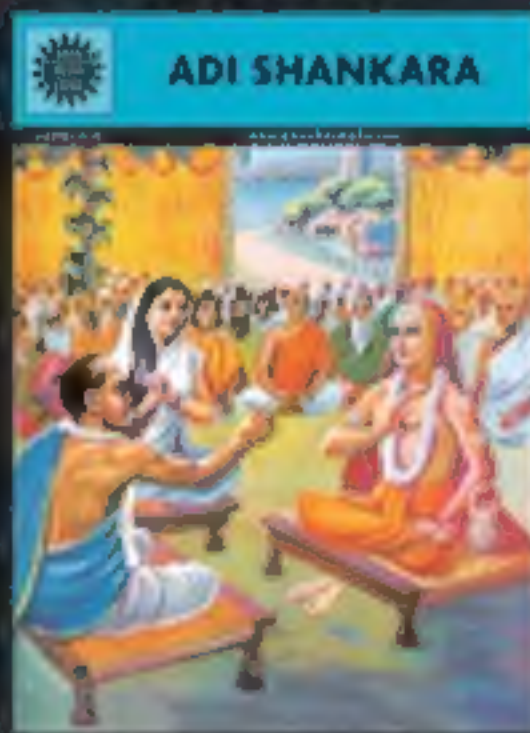
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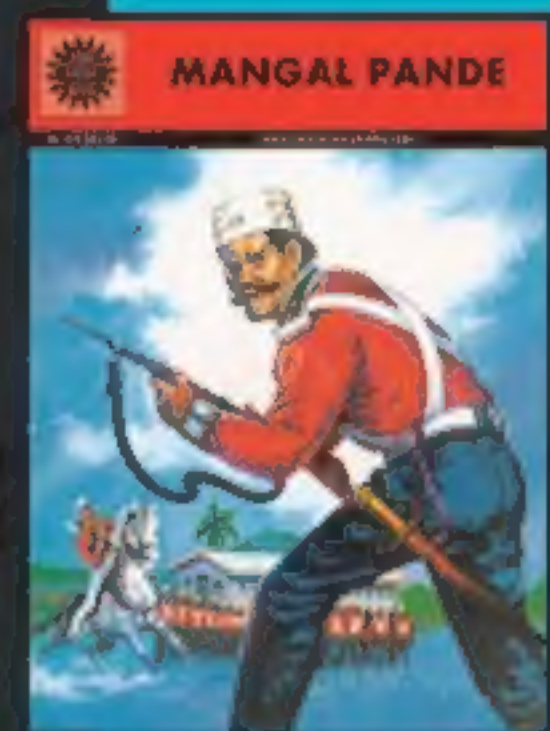
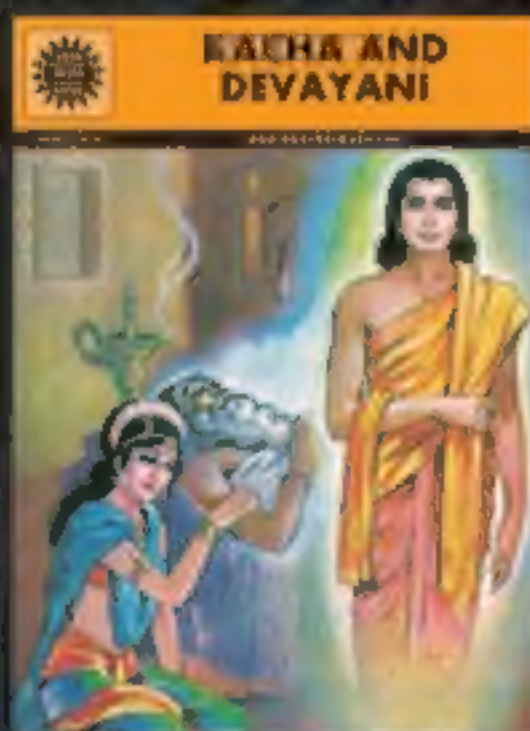
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